Fiscal amnesty must strengthen treasury

According to the National Bank, Belgian investors hold around 174 billion euros abroad, mainly in Luxembourg.

The Purple negotiators now have a big stick with which to attract money held abroad back to this country. On 1 January 2005 the European Savings Directive will take effect and for example an advance levy of 15% can be charged in Luxembourg on movable income of other citizens of the European Union. The government wants to bring money back to Belgium with a one-off operation. In exchange for a levy of, e.g., 10% on capital, evaders will no longer have to pay any fines and penalty interest. The Purple yesterday agreed on seven measures to combat fraud. The proposal for fiscal amnesty seems easier for the SPA to press through its plan to tackle fiscal fraud in the negotiations. According to the National Bank, Belgian investors hold around 174 billion euros abroad, mainly in Luxembourg (FF).

ISABEL ALBERS/BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 4 JULY

INTRODUCTION

The Copernicus reform of the Federal administration should be one of the next Federal Government’s showpieces. Civil Service Minister Luc Vanden Bossche (SPA), who had already earned his spurs in the Flemish administration as regards administrative reform, could make it the crowning glory of his political career. Guy Verhofstadt supported his minister in word and deed. The ministerial cabinets, exponents of the old political culture and the associated political appointments, were abolished with effect from July 2001. Verhofstadt himself and Vanden Bossche set a good example. They retained only a small political secretariat office and installed a policy preparation unit and a policy council with their top civil servants and external experts in their administration. It should be pointed out for the sake of completeness, however, that in Verhofstadt’s case his principal private secretary went to head up the administration and his entire cabinet was transferred to the policy unit. Unfortunately for the advocates of administrative reform, no other minister followed their example. They simply made use of the exception ruling that allowed them to retain their cabinet until the end of the period of government in 2003. Meanwhile it has emerged that Verhofstadt is now pretty much the only defender of the Copernicus reform. His companion in arms Luc Vanden Bossche has left politics and is now running Zaventem airport (BIAC). The idea now seems to have caught on in all the parties that the Copernicus reform is anything but a success. This explains, so De Standaard learned, the abolition of the cabinets - apart from Guy Verhofstadt himself - is no longer defended by any of the negotiators involved in forming a new government. However, that the final piece of the whole reform cannot find a breakthrough is not being said in so many words. The turnaround has now seemed to have caught on in all the parties that the Copernicus reform is anything but a success. 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Frank Vandecaveye • editor in chief
Fundamental choices in the formation of new government known

The weeks of trying to form a new Federal government in Lambermont are taking their toll. The two figureheads of the Francophone parties, Louis Michel (MR) and Elio Di Rupo (PS), each spent several days away from the negotiations. Michel cited health problems, Di Rupo private reasons, although this was doubted in the press because on Sunday he got particularly angry with the Flemish Liberals. Michel declared himself disappointed with the attacks in the Flemish press on his foreign policy - partly in connection with the Genocide Act - Di Rupo went for lunch with Verhofstadt after two days absence and denied that he had stayed away from the negotiating table out of anger. Meanwhile, more and more main themes of the government's programme are becoming visible. But that does not in any way mean that balanced budgetary agreements have been reached for the period 2004-2007. Nevertheless, in addition to what may be the thorniest dossier, that of the NMBS (the railways), it seems that an agreement has also been reached on a number of fundamental choices in key policy areas such as healthcare, employment, justice and taxation.

In terms of healthcare it has been agreed that health insurance expenditure can rise by 4.5%. Under the last government the average rise was 4.2%. 100 million euros is also being set aside for minor health risks for the self-employed.

Justice and security may sustain a growth rate of 4.1% under the next government. The Liberals are to get their 800 million cut in taxes from work for businesses, although these will be selectively allocated for the elderly, low-paid and non-profit workers.

For low-wage earners 500 million euros is being set aside for a work bonus designed to make working more financially attractive than living on unemployment benefit. At the insistence of Steve Stevaert (SP.A), controls of tax fraud are to be tightened up, partly among businesses with fictional addresses and single-person companies.

And finally the duty on tobacco and polluting fuels is to rise.

Leterme puts new CD&V on track

With 93% of the votes Yves Leterme was elected as new Party Chairman of the CD&V on Saturday (28 June). Leterme succeeds Stefaan De Clerck, who after his party's defeat in the Federal elections on 18 May felt obliged to tender his resignation. Leterme is already expected to end the party's successive series of electoral defeats at the coming elections for the Flemish Parliament. In the autumn Leterme wants to attract potential voters with a tour of Flanders, which he christened 'CD&V at work' and with which he wants to expand his party's network with new 'committed people'. Also in the autumn he wants to begin talks with the Flemish-national N-VA on the possibility of going to the polls in 2004 with a joint list.

As ACW leader, Yves Leterme is a much better debater than his predecessor De Clerck. He proved that as Parliamentary Party Leader in the Chamber. Shorter, more pragmatic and above all more painful for the opposition. Leterme wants to break through the legendary 'Tsjeven' (CD&V) greyness. Not always looking for a compromise to a compromise in order to get everyone in the party behind a single opinion. The election manifesto for 2004 will be much shorter than its 2003 counterpart. It will only contain those opinions in which the CD&V differs from the other parties. Yves Leterme frequently talks of 'applied Christian democracy'. By that he means that the CD&V's 'exalted' programme of values must be translated into situations and problems that people have to deal with on a daily basis.

Socio-economically he therefore occupies something of a centre-left position. He is unlikely to make many changes here. Where he may surprise, however, is on topics that concern community structures: family, children, safety and morals. Here he is more likely to follow a right-conservative path. If Leterme can form an alliance with the N-VA of Geert Bourgeois, he is certain to do so. No matter what the ACW leadership does. Obviously there are problems in terms of content: the N-VA is republican, wants independence for Flanders and is not in favour of much consultation with the centre-field (trade unions, health insurance funds and other organisations). Points that are in conflict with the CD&V manifesto.
That progress has been made in one of the thorniest dossiers in the government negotiations, that of the NMBS (the railways), represents a ray of hope. The negotiators declared themselves ready to take over the railway company’s historic debt. This amounts to 7.2 billion euros, or 3% of the Gross Domestic Product. No clear statements have yet been made on how many lines will perish or on the regionalisation of part of the railways. Apparently, however, the Government is to commit itself to providing 4 million euros to subsidise commuter travel. The aim is that in time this will become free - a pet subject of the SPA - although employers are not inclined to share in paying for this and although the Christian trade union has its criticism, to the considerable irritation of its Socialist counterpart, the ABVV (FF).

Johan Raskin - De Standaard - 2 July

Pieter Timmermans, Director-General of the Federation of Enterprises in Belgium (VBO), is brief in his analysis: ’There’s no such thing as free commuter travel. The 4 million euros the Government wants to set aside for train travel is of no use to most workers or other social benefits. Also, free public transport sounds fine, but will factor this rise in costs into pay rises, because businesses are not inclined to share in paying for this and although the Christian trade union has its criticism, to the considerable irritation of its Socialist counterpart, the ABVV (FF).

Evelyne Hens - De Financieel-Economische Tijd - 3 July

’Is the ACV’s reaction purely inspired by party politics because the idea comes from Steve Stevaert?’ wonders Mia de Vits, Chairwoman of the socialist trade union ABVV. She points out that the three trade unions called for the cost of public transport for workers to be repaid in full as far back as 2000. De Vits acknowledges that free commuter travel must not be directed at the current small band of train users. There must first be a debate on transport involving social partners and the regions, she feels. The ABVV also rejects the calculation of the FEB. According to the union, the cost is not 100 million euros, but 35 million euros. The price of increasing the employer’s contribution to train tickets from 60 to 100% would cost around 54 million euros. But in many companies the actual employer’s contribution is greater than 60%, which means the actual cost would only be around 35 million euros. The price of increasing the employer’s contribution to train tickets from 60 to 100% would correspond to 0.05% of the wage bill.

De Vits: ’We’re not talking impossible amounts here.’ She also stresses that employers are forgetting the social cost of CO2 emissions, road traffic accidents or time lost through queues.

www.nmbs.be
www.vbo.be
www.acw.be
www.abvv.be

Customers, staff and management react to rail strike

FF Editor

For some of the 70,000 people attending the Rock Werchter festival the rail strike of 30 June in protest at the Move 2007 investment plan of railways boss Karel Vinck appeared not to be an insurmountable problem. After all, the Flemish transport company De Lijn put on an extra 50 buses from Leuven to the other four provinces and Brussels. For the 700,000 commuters who had to travel to work on 30 June like any other Monday, there was little choice other than to take the car, which produced record queues. These were made even worse by the first rain showers, several roadworks on the motorways and the holiday exodus.

For the trade unions, on the other hand, the strike was a success. 60 to 70% of staff did not turn up. They are now hoping that the NMBS management will rewrite its investment plan. The NMBS management in turn called the strike action hasty. The contested plan is not to be accepted or rejected, they said. It is simply a discussion document. They also estimated that the strike had cost them around 3 million euros. The railways company announced that it would compensate its customers who were inconvenienced by the strike. All holders of a rail pass that was valid on 30 June will receive a Sorry Pass, which they can use for unlimited travel between Belgian stations for a single day until the end of this year.

www.nmbs.be

Belgian winning and losing shares in the first half year of 2003 (return)

| pcb  | +244.8% |
| epq  | +137.5% |
| option international | +107.3% |
| telindus | +73.8% |
| mobistar | +57.7% |
| remi claeys aluminium | +57.3% |
| econom | +54.3% |
| delhaize | +53.5% |
| exmar | +51.7% |
| spadel | +51.1% |
| rti group | +49.0% |
| kinepolis | +40.6% |
| lsg | +37.3% |
| catala | +36.3% |
| innogenetics | +35.6% |
| thema vision | -92.0% |
| think media | -47.1% |
| accentis | -39.2% |
| city hotels | -39.1% |
| quick | -37.3% |
| ibt | -35.4% |
| hamon | -30.9% |
| trustcapital partners | -30.3% |
| sabca | -30.0% |
| iba | -29.4% |
| ubizen | -28.6% |
|ibel | -24.3% |
| neuhaus | -18.8% |
| ubc | -18.5% |
| associated weavers | -16.3% |

Source: Teo Graphics
MOBILITY

CD & V has plan for partial regionalisation of railways

CD & V Senator and predecessor of Karel Vinck, Etienne Schouppe, has a plan for the partial regionalisation of Belgian Railways. On the day the railways were crippled by a strike, he launched the idea of giving the Regions the power to manage local slow trains. (FF).

BART EECHOUT - DE MORGEN - 1 JULY

The CD & V fears a social bloodbath at the NMBS. The investment plan of railways boss Karel Vinck predicts 10,000 job losses. According to his predecessor Etienne Schouppe, that number can only be reached by simple redundancies or by allowing early retirement from the age of 48. Both options are unacceptable to the CD & V. The CD & V does, however, support Karel Vinck’s proposal to have the State take over the NMBS debt of 7.2 billion euros by the end of 2005. To get rid of the structural deficit the regions must take over the organisation of slow trains. ‘These have to link up more efficiently with the regional transport company De Lijn,’ finds Schouppe. ‘In Flanders De Lijn must determine how and where trains and buses can complement each other. Apart from in Brussels a regional express network will ultimately have to be introduced in Antwerp or Ghent as well. De Lijn can then buy trains and services from the NMBS or possibly from a third party.’ The CD & V also wants the regions to be able to prefinance investments in exchange for a voice on the Board of Directors, so that the linking of the ports of Antwerp and Zeebrugge does not have to be postponed for financial reasons.

CHRISTOF VAN SCHOBROEK • DE STANDAARD • 1 JULY

‘This plan is our vision, it’s not a concrete plan of action, but it certainly isn’t without obligations,’ said Jos Geuens, Chairman of De Lijn’s Board of Directors yesterday. ‘We want this plan to stimulate discussion in Flanders and weigh as heavily as possible in the government’s programme when a new Flemish government is formed in the middle of next year.’

A tram on the Singel and the introduction of the Antwerp pre-metro below Turnhoutsesteenweg are the spearheads of the plans for Antwerp. De Lijn wants to use these to refine the web of tram and bus lines in and around Antwerp. These measures are designed to provide De Lijn with 30 million extra passengers in Antwerp. Ghent is to get an additional six tram lines, increasing the number of lines from 35 km to 80. In addition, De Lijn is planning an extensive Park&Ride belt around Ghent, so that car-users can easily switch from the car to public transport. The Ghent plans are designed to attract 15 million extra passengers onto public transport.

In Flemish-Brabant the emphasis is on developing an ‘express network’. A network of 21 express bus lines must ensure fast connections to both Brussel and Leuven, as well as to other towns and cities in Flemish-Brabant. De Lijn also wants to double the number of regional lines and improve the accessibility of train stations by bus. De Lijn reckons these measures will produce 35 million extra passengers in Flemish-Brabant.

In total the plans must therefore produce eighty million extra passengers by 2025. That seems a lot, yet contrasts sharply with the one hundred million new passengers De Lijn has carried in the past four years. Last year De Lijn recorded 318 million passengers. This increase is mainly the result of successful pricing measures for different age categories. Senior citizens can travel on trams and buses for free and young people enjoy extremely favourable rates. Last year De Lijn achieved a turnover of 544 million euros, but the proportion of government subsidy in that figure amounted to 437 million euros. ‘The Flemish Government likes us,’ Geuens said yesterday.

‘Eighty million is an extremely conservative estimate,’ says Managing Director Ingrid Lieten. ‘That number only includes the additional passengers provided by the expansion of the network. When you add in additional pricing measures, that number could be rather higher.’

Lieten is also aware that the plan will stand or fall by the flow of traffic. Buses do not generally have separate lanes, and even trams are frequently blocked by the congested road traffic. ‘We’ve now mapped out all the black spots. We will now talk with the road maintenance authorities to get rid of these spots.’

WWW.DELIJN.BE
Agreement on principles of Flemish ecological network

On 27 June the Flemish Government reached an agreement in principle on the demarcation of the Flemish Ecological Network (Vlaams Ecologisch Netwerk, VEN). In total this will involve 86,500 hectares of areas of high ecological value that will receive extra protection. Right before the elections the opponents of the VEN, mainly owners of homes and businesses in VEN areas, fishermen, farmers and hunters expressed their discontent in a major demonstration in Ghent which was mainly directed at the Green party Agalev. Flemish Minister-President Somers (VLD) promised them that they would be involved in the nature guideline plans that were intended to refine the VEN areas up to plot level. Nevertheless, the Boerenbond (Farmers’ Union) is angry because the VLD announced an agreement without first consulting with the farmers’ organisation. According to Boerenbond Chairman Roger Saenen, the VLD had promised to do so and deceived the farmers. The environmental organisation Natuurpunt, on the other hand, is satisfied with the decision of the Flemish Government (FF).

The VEN policy is aimed at preserving, restoring and developing nature. For each VEN area a nature guideline plan has to be drawn up that lays down the concrete objectives for that area and a number of compulsory measures that are necessary to achieve these objectives. When drawing up the nature guideline plans a consensus will be aimed for between all interested parties: owners of homes and businesses, people who work in the VEN and the government.

If no agreement is reached, the Flemish ministers for the environment and spatial planning will have to cut the knot. The Flemish Minister for Spatial Planning, Dirk van Mechelen, emphasised that nothing would change for the owners of homes and businesses ‘in the wrong zone’ (‘zonevreemd’). ‘The regulations we drew up for this in 2001 and 2002 will continue to apply.’ The government has set aside 25 million euros annually for VEN areas. The demarcation of the 86,500 hectares is only the first phase of the VEN process. In total 125,000 hectares have to be demarcated as part of the Flemish Ecological Network.

WWW.VLAANDEREN.BE

Owners of undeveloped plots of land in a VEN area can for example benefit from exemption from inheritance taxes. Nor do they have to pay mill rates.

IELSE DEVOOGHT • DE FINANCIËLE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 28 JUNE

De Lijn Chairman Jos Geuens is therefore proposing letting De Lijn travel in circles around the city, increasing the number of access points and increasing the frequency of trams. The use of extra trams and buses will cost some 40 million euros, which the Flemish Government has to approve at the Council of Ministers on 4 July.

ILSE DEVOOGHT • DE FINANCIELE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 28 JUNE

De Lijn is to ask the Flemish Government for a further 40 million euros for additional investment before the summer recess. In 2004 the Ring Road around Antwerp is to be resurfaced and the work this will involve threatens to force traffic entering and leaving the city into several bottlenecks, because all entry and exit slip roads will be closed. Cars will use the much smaller inner ring road, the Singel, which will lead to gridlock during peak times. De Lijn Chairman Jos Geuens is therefore proposing letting De Lijn travel in circles around the city, increasing the number of access points and increasing the frequency of trams. The use of extra trams and buses will cost some 40 million euros, which the Flemish Government has to approve at the Council of Ministers on 4 July.

Antwerp counts on tram and bus during work on ring road

FF EDITORIAL TEAM

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Evolution of Flemish Unemployment in June

Source: TiJD-GRAPICS

Unemployed persons entitled to benefit in Belgium:
407.011 (+1,2% compared with May)

Job seekers in Belgium:
506.971 (+11,3% compared with June 2002)

Unemployed persons entitled to benefit in Flanders:
149.869 (+2,5% compared with May)

Job seekers in Flanders:
191.531 (+14,7% compared with June 2002)
Bossuyt advises consumers to renew electricity contract

The deregulation of the electricity market has been met with much criticism in the press. In principle the deregulation is good news for Flemish consumers, because their electricity bill will either fall or at least remain the same. But the complexity of prices among the various suppliers (Electrabel, Watuplus, Nuon, Luminus) makes it extremely difficult for consumers to find the most beneficial contract. It therefore comes as no surprise that barely 25,000 Flemings have switched to a different supplier. On the website www.stroomtarieven.be (CREG) or www.vreg.be of the Flemish Regulatory Body for the Electricity and Gas Market (Vlaamse Reguleringsinstantie voor de Elektriciteits- en de Gasmarkt, VREG) each resident can calculate the rate for his house, but caution is nevertheless advised. Not only consumption, family composition, but also the region (the distributor) play a part and it is highly likely that prices will be adjusted next month and then again the month after that. The Flemish Minister for Energy, Gilbert Bossuyt, is now advising Flemish consumers to take out a new contract, as it will prove cheaper (FF).

ERIK DE LEYE • DE FINANCIEL-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 2 JULY

Anybody who had not taken out a new contract with a supplier was automatically switched from the intermunicipal company to the standard supplier of the intermunicipal company on 1 July. For the pure intermunicipal companies that is Luminus, for the mixed ones Electrabel Consumer Solutions (ECS). Consumers who do not take out a new contract are covered by the terms of the standard supplier and pay the price that applied before deregulation. The Flemish Energy Minister says that information from the Flemish Regulatory Body for the Electricity and Gas Market (VREG) shows that consumers who take out a contract with ECS, Luminus or one of the other suppliers such as Nuon Belgium or WattPlus are better off. They would make an average saving of 5 to 6% by taking out a new contract. 'The comparison of the various suppliers' offers on the VREG’s ‘website shows that people are better off taking out a new electricity contract,' says Bossuyt.

One calendar month’s notice must be given when terminating a contract with the standard supplier. Those who terminate in July will therefore switch to the new contract as of 1 September. That can be with a different supplier or with the standard supplier. The terms that standard suppliers offer consumers with a new contract are mostly better than those for so-called ‘sleeping’ customers. At Bossuyt’s request the VREG produced an overview of offers on its website (www.vreg.be). There consumers can find information on the offers of the various suppliers in Flanders. The website provides an informative overview, based on the consumer categories used by the European Institute of Statistics, Eurostat. It does not calculate individual bills. Apart from the price, the website also takes account of qualitative terms such as the adaptability of the price, the term of the contract or the period of notice. Bossuyt admits that the VREG can only reach a limited percentage of the population via the Internet. He is afraid that many consumers will do nothing and therefore pay more for their electricity. 'We can’t reach everyone via the Internet. We need to find another way of reaching the rest of the population,' says Bossuyt. He thinks that local authorities and Public Social Assistance Centres (Openbare Centra voor Maatschappelijke Welzijn, OCWMs) can help vulnerable groups take out a new contract.

WWW.VREG.BE

What changed on the first of July?

When governments table draft acts and decrees or parliaments vote on these, that is news. When they actually take effect, that is generally much less the case. This time some newspapers made an exception and presented a summary of acts and regulations that came into effect on 1 July. And there are plenty of them. Here is a summary of the key ones.

On a Federal level the new social status of the artist was introduced on 1 July. Every Belgian artist who provides services to order will now be seen as an employee and benefit from social protection and his employer is henceforth exempted from 35 euros of employer’s contributions per day. Secondly, hotel and catering firms (restaurants, hotels) will now have to pay significantly fewer employer’s contributions for extra staff who are taken on at peak times (maximum 45 days a year). Unemployment benefits for workers who are economically unemployed are also being increased, more specifically from 60 to 65% of their wage. And finally, from 1 July the laboratory costs of in-vitro fertilisation (IVF) will be refunded by the health insurance fund. On average this amounts to 1,250 euros per attempt.

In Flanders the most important changes are undoubtedly the deregulation of the electricity market, allowing individuals to choose from whom they buy their natural gas and electricity and the opening of the entrepreneur offices, where the self-employed and (potential) entrepreneurs can process their establishment or modification in full. Also in Flanders the capital transfer taxes when transferring companies are being reduced from 3 to 2%.
Deurne commercial airport almost a certainty

The Diamond High Council, various businesses and several private individuals have promised to provide 14.75 million euros.

As things currently stand, it looks like the commercial airport at Deurne (near Antwerp) will go ahead. An absolute condition was the tunnelling of a motorway (the Krijgsbaan) so that the safety regulations were satisfied and the runway remained long enough. The Flemish Government has now given the green light to set up a public-private partnership (PPP) to carry out the tunnelling work. It was agreed that the private sector would provide half of the required amount. Flanders Venture Capital Company (Participatiemaatschappij Vlaanderen, PMV) was commissioned to find private partners. The Diamond High Council, various businesses and several private individuals have promised to provide 14.75 million euros (FF).

MARK DEWEERDT • DE FINANCIELE-ECONOMISCHE TIJD • 28 JUNE

The Flemish Government commissioned the PMV to set up a PPP company to carry out the tunnelling work and draw up a business plan for the operation of Deurne as a commercial airport. The commercial partners must actually invest the promised 14.75 million euros in the company. Minister for the Budget and Finance, Dirk van Mieghem (VLD), emphasised yesterday that the PPP construction must satisfy the conditions of the Finance Inspectorate. That means that the private sector and the government will each bear 50% of the cost of building the tunnel. The PPP company will also develop part of the land on the airport site and operate the commercial airport. The private partners have insisted that their contribution show a profit. Yet more partners can join the PPP construction for these activities. Van Mieghem yesterday called on the province and the city of Antwerp to do that. The Flemish Employers’ Association (Vlaams Economisch Verbond, VEV) and Antwerp-Waasland Chamber of Commerce, who brought in the private partners, applauded the decision of the Flemish Government.

www.vev.be

Philippe Herreweghe is primarily known internationally as the founder and leader of the Collegium Vocale. In the 1970s Herreweghe and the Collegium Vocale were the first to also apply the historical, more authentic interpretation of Baroque music already held by instrumentalists to vocal music. The breakthrough came when Herreweghe was invited by Nicolaas Harnoncourt and Gustav Leonhardt to perform and record the complete cantatas of J. S. Bach. Although the Collegium Vocale also rediscovered and performed a great many polyphonic works from the Renaissance, Bach’s Baroque music remained its absolute speciality. In addition to the choir, the Collegium Vocale orchestra was also set up at the end of the 1980s especially for this repertoire. At the end of the 1970s Herreweghe moved to Paris, where he established the ensemble La Chapelle Royale, with which he performed the music of France’s Golden Century. Since then he has established the Ensemble Vocale Européen, specialising in Renaissance polyphony, and the Orchestre des Champs Elysées, which performs the Romantic and pre-Romantic repertoire on original instruments. For several years Herreweghe has been back in Flanders as musical director of deFilharmonie, where he is increasingly concentrating on the Romantic repertoire (Bruckner, Schumann, Mendelssohn). Since Herreweghe’s arrival, deFilharmonie’s star has been in the ascendency. To celebrate their successful collaboration, deFilharmonie and Herreweghe decided to organise an annual festival. St Bavo’s Cathedral in his home city of Ghent was an obvious choice as the location, likewise the name of the festival: the Herreweghe Festival. This year the programme includes a Bruckner symphony and Brahms’ Requiem. Knack secured an interview with the celebrated director in which he explained his vision of ‘classical music’ (FF).

PIET PIRYNS • KNACK • 2 JULY

According to Herreweghe, people look for beauty in classical music, and that can have a comforting effect, he feels, but ‘in my opinion music is just as much about a form of pre-logical thought. In the course of history Western classical music has unfortunately been overrun - colonised - by rhetoric. The primary function of Bach’s cantatas was to get across the message of the Counter Reformation as powerfully as possible, but they also expressed pure emotion. Of course, at a particular moment this road comes to an end: after Schönberg it was impossible to go any further with those extremely tormented harmonies with enormous orchestras. Stravinsky looked back to the pure form. But if you take that as far as it will go, you reach the excrescences of certain composers from the serial school: sterile music. The best evidence of this is that the public is still not listening to it. Just as we humans are simultaneously body and soul, so music that wants to stand the test of time will have to attach just as much importance to structure as to emotion.’ Although Bach is his speciality, Herreweghe does not feel excessively strongly about Baroque music. ‘Some fantastic operas (Monteverdi) were written at that time, the most beautiful pages for harpsichord or gamba, but for ensemble music the Renaissance was infinitely richer and deeper than the Baroque. For me it’s still a mystery that such a giant as Bach has come to the fore.’ In recent years he has focused more on the Romantic repertoire: ‘For me, Bach is the universal genius, but as a post-modern man I want to sample all worlds and the sort of emotion that Bach’s music radiates is entirely different from Beethoven or Debussy.’

www.defilharmonie.be
**DISPERSIE**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- Until August: Afrikaal, the Caravan, moving African circus in Flemish towns www.afrikaal.be
- 2 to 10 July: Klinkende Munt, Muntplein, Brussels with Spook and the Guay, Belgian Afrobeat artists, info: Frank Londo’s Klezmer Brass Allstars, Dave Douglas Quintet and Dj Grazzhoppa’s Dj Bigband; info: www.beurschouwburg.be
- 6 July: Jong Ben Jor, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
  - 11, 12 and 13 July: Cactus Festival, Bruges, with Susanne Vega, Joe Jackson, Stereo Mc’s, Boz Scaggs, Toots & The Maytals and Bonnie Raitt
  - 12 and 13 July: 27th Broselafé Festival, Folk and Jazz with Danny Thompson & Julie Murphy, Cara Dillon, Urban Trad, Miroslav Vitous and others, Hézél, Brussels; info: www.broselafé.be
  - 15 and 19 July: Cassandra Wilson and Zap Mama, Rivierenhof, Deurne; info: 03/070/222.192
- 22 and 23 July: Robbie Williams, Sportpaleis, Antwerp; info: 0900/26060
- 18 to 27 July: Blue Note Festival with Herbie Hancock, Bill Frisell, John Zorn, Philip Catherine, The Cinematic Orchestra, Marcus Miller, The Zawinul Syndicate, Candy Dulfer, etc.; info: www.bluenotefestival.com
- 19 to 28 July: Gentse Feesten, concerts and shows on various places in the city centre; gentsefeesten.be with latin and african music at the Police Festival Ghent (www.policeole.be), Jazz music at the Blue Note Festival (www.bluenotefestival.com) and Boomtown festival (dj sets, rock bands www.boomtown-live.be) and 10days (www.10days.be) festival in the Vooruit (www.vooruit.be), Ghent
- 18 to 20 July: Belgium Rhythm & Blues Festival, Peer with Solomon Burke, Dave Edmunds, Richard Johnston and others; info: www.break-away.be
- From 24 July onwards: Salam Toto, with circus (Cyrk 13, DNAC, Le Cirque de la Licorne, Buren Cirque, Circus Cabane) with horse show (Salam Toto), with theatre (SKAGEN, Doktor, De Onderneming), with dance and music in the neighbourhoods and exhibitions (Panameirenko, Costumescape by Peter Jones; Antwerp; info: www.zva.be)
- Until 20 August: Summerfestival with Juan Diego Florez, the sisters Labeque, Ivan Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Jordi Savall, Joe Lovano, Pieter Wispelwey and Bobbie Mc Ferrin, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02 www.concertgebouw.be

**EXPO**

- From 22 March to 17 January: Jacques Brel, ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, Schildknaapstraat 50, Brussels; info: 02/512.64.22
- Until 21 September: Art on Cows, Open Air Exhibition, City Centre, Brussels; info: www.cows.be
- Until 14 September: Just like life - Belgian art from the museum collection, SMAK, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
- Until 14 September: Transfers, contemporary art from Africa, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- Until 18 December: The museum evenings, every Thursday; www.museumvereniging.be
- Until 7 September: Young Belgian Painters, PSK, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be
- Until 20 October: Maya-tissues, mirror of a world vision, with their hands and eyes, etnographical museum, Antwerp; info: 03/220.86.00

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**CULTURE**

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**DIARY**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

- Until August: folkfestival Dranouter with Daniel Lanois, Afro Cett Sound System, Linda Thompson, Beth Gibbons and others; info: www.folkfestival.brussels
- 1 to 10 August: Lokerse Feesten with Burning Spear, Ozark Henry, Das Pop, Calexico, Anouk, Brainpower, Ian McCulloch, Praga Khan, Lokeren; info: www.lokersefeesten.be
- 8 and 9 August: Antilliaanse Feesten (car- ribs, Latin), Hoogstraten; info: www.antilliaansefeesten.be
- 30 June to 31 August: The Summer of Antwerp with circus (Cyck 13, DNAC, Le Cirque de la Licorne, Buren Cirque, Circus Cabane) with horse show (Salam Toto), with theatre (SKAGEN, Doktor, De Onderneming), with dance and music in the neighbour- hoods and exhibitions (Panameirenko, Costumescape by Peter Jones; Antwerp; info: www.zva.be)
- 20 August: Summertime Festival with Juan Diego Florez, the sisters Labeque, Ivan Fischer and the Budapest Festival Orchestra, Jordi Savall, Joe Lovano, Pieter Wispelwey and Bobbie Mc Ferrin, Concertgebouw, Bruges; info: 070/22.33.02 www.concertgebouw.be

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**EXPO**

- 22 March to 17 January: Jacques Brel, ‘The right to dream’, exhibition, Schildknaapstraat 50, Brussels; info: 02/511.10.20
- Until 30 August: The four seasons in the art of the Low Countries, City Museum Leuven; info: 016/22.69.06 www.leuven.be
- Until 7 September: Exhibition: Masterpieces of Belgian Art, the Simon Collection, Museum of Elsene, Brussels; info: 02/512.64.22
- Until 21 September: Art on Cows, Open Air Exhibition, City Centre, Brussels; info: www.cows.be
- Until 14 September: Just like life - Belgian art from the museum collection, SMAK, Ghent; info: www.smak.be
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