Walloon economists point to perverse effect of financial transfers

A study by the Flemish administration showed last year that EUR 6.58 billion per year goes from Flanders to Wallonia and Brussels: EUR 3.74 billion via social security, EUR 1.3 billion via the financing of the regions and communities, and EUR 1.4 billion via the federal government. This financial flow is debilitating the economy in Wallonia, whereas precisely what Wallonia needs is a strong economic revival. That opinion is not expressed by Flemish hard-liners but by three prominent French-speaking economists, speaking at a university study day in Brussels. According to the professors, Wallonia is only contributing 26.7% to the GNP. That low share is more than offset, however, by the transfers from Flanders, so that the spending level emerges above the European average (FF).

GEORGE TIMMERMAN • DE MORGEN • 20 MAY

For professor Henri Capron of the ULB, the flows of funds from Flanders are useful for the country’s social cohesion, but ‘the perverse thing about it is that the population is not made aware of the region’s economic problems and consequently does not invest in new businesses’.

Pierre Pesteau of the University of Liège says that the employment of more than 20% in some Walloon regions is ‘an ongoing scandal’, which the Walloon ministers should be made to wake up to. Pesteau explains that in the event of Belgium possibly splitting, the level of expenditure on social security in Wallonia would fall by 20%. Hence his call for politicians to finally tackle the problems. His colleague Michel Mignolet of the University of Namur has an original solution. He proposes making the wage differences between north and south even bigger (in Flanders wages are currently already 4% higher), with the aim of making industry in the southern part of the country more profitable. Another alarming element, according to Mignolet, is the gross yield on private capital, which is much lower in Wallonia (14.6%) than in Flanders (17.5%). That points to a rather lower production efficiency. However, the professors expecting the most important effort to be made by the Walloon government, which should give priority to productive government investments and should spend less on administrative expenses.

Frank Vandecaveye • editor in chief
Flemish government parties reconfirms mutual trust after BHV debacle

The attempt at reconciliation by the Flemish government parties after the debacle of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde has been tough, but after a marathon 14-hour meeting the ministers have reached agreement on the measures that the Flemish Government wants to take to restore mutual trust. In this package of measures considerable attention goes to the Flemish character of the municipalities of the periphery around Brussels. The Flemish Government also wants better agreements with the federal and other governments in this country on compliance with financial agreements and budget rules. In his government policy statement before the Flemish Parliament Minister-President Yves Leterme said that the Flemish Government ‘will use all means to counter the territorial exceeding of authority by another Community or Region’ (FF).

DE STANDAARD • 18 MAY

Specifically, a number of policy options concerning education, employment, care services and social housing will be rushed through in the Flemish periphery. Initiatives are to be taken in the field of education and employment to promote the use and knowledge of Dutch in the periphery. A decree is also being worked on to ensure that anyone who has executive power in a municipality has a knowledge of Dutch. EUR 25 million is being set aside for social housing in the periphery. Candidates for social housing would have to have ‘a social and socio-cultural connection’ with the area. In the field of health care, a MUG [medical emergency group] department will be set up in Halle and the care network for Dutch speakers in Brussels will be extended.

The Flemish Government also wants better agreements and arrangements with the other governments, among other things on compliance with the budget rules and financial relations between the Flemish and federal authorities. According to Leterme, these measures ‘do not mean that the debate is over and done with’. The statement says that the ‘Flemish Government continues wholeheartedly to back the demand for a split’.

WWW.VLAAMSParlement.BE
WWW.YVESLETERME.BE

Tripartite federal coalition almost unavoidable in 2007, says Stevaert

In an interview in De Tijd (18 May) SP.A-chairman Steve Stevaert acknowledges that he erred in the BHV affair and apologises. He fears that the aftermath of the crisis will help polarise the divide between Flanders and French-speaking Belgium. But he warned that he did not want to take part in a game of ‘upping the community stakes’. For that matter, he feels that ‘sensible French-speaking politicians’ now know that they have achieved a Pyrrhic victory and that they are now in the red with the Flemings. He doubts that there was a solid Francophone front. Rather, there was talk of blackmail within the MR, where FDF leader Maingain applied pressure to chairman and minister Reynders. He expresses more concerns, too, about the long-term consequences of BHV. For the federal elections of 2007, he expects that on the Flemish side the CD&V, VLD and SP.A will be forced to govern together (FF).

RENAAT SCHROOTEN • DE TIJD • 18 MAY

Aside from all the great emotions there are a couple of more sober conclusions to be drawn. It remains impossible in this country to push through such a reform against one of the communities. The inclusion of the ‘immediate split’ in the Flemish coalition agreement after a period of electoral stakes-raising was therefore a piece of strategic idiocy that brought the Francophones to the negotiations with one seat.

That idiocy has now cost the VLD and SP.A a certain amount of credibility: they have not been able to do what they promised. Within a matter of days it will also have the same effect in the Flemish Government and the CD&V-N-VA cartel. They can shout and bellow all they want, they still do not have the leverage to implement the split, let alone a strategy to make it succeed.

So what is left? Trip up their own Minister-President, at a time when he is enjoying public popularity with his style of government? Unlikely. Form a new coalition with the VB, on the theme of Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde? In that case the only certainty is that the CD&V will split quicker than the constituency. In short, like it or not they have to continue, and they will also have to learn to live with the idea that their wishes did not become a reality, that they could not keep their promises.

Meanwhile, the question has immobilised political decision-making for months, a fact now clearly evident in the confidence barometers among public and employers. At a time when economic growth has stagnated, as well. We can also put that down to this discussion.

The question is whether the Federal Government can still turn that climate round. Verhofstadt has again incurred heavy damage here. Not only in his own party, but also in his government. A leader who can no longer provide solutions loses prestige, as simple as that.
A new start for the Flemish government

‘Hopefully an end has now come to the spectacle of Flemish parties taunting each other and accusing each other of breach of promise or hypocrisy’

The new Flemish Government statement contains a series of measures for the Flemish periphery around Brussels. Apart from priority for Flemings in social housing, the government also announces a language exam for executive mandates in local councils and an obligatory Dutch course for French-speaking unemployed persons. Application of the Peeters circular is also being made stricter. This obliges French-speakers to submit a fresh request for every French copy of a government document. Finally there will be a Flemish inspection of the Francophone education system. Filip Dewinter of the opposition party Vlaams Belang was not impressed by the statement. He pulled out all the stops and asked ‘Calimero’ Leterme to stand down after the ‘orgy of lies and deceit’ of the last few days (FF).

Opinion
BART STURTEWAGEN • DE STANDAARD • 19 MAY
The most important positive point after the Flemish Government’s new start is that an end has now hopefully come to the humiliating spectacle of Flemish parties taunting each other and accusing each other of breach of promise or hypocrisy. That dismal display went on for too long.

The list of ‘confidence-raising measures’ is fortunately not limited to a mere game of ‘Francophone-baiting’. But that of course also means that many elements in it already fell under Flanders’ powers and therefore did not have to wait for the downfall of the project for the splitting of B-H-V in order to be put into effect.

The Flemish Government is sending out powerful signals that it is no longer planning to act as a kind of rural subsidiary of the federal government. The asymmetry with which the country has to live is thereby fleshed out in somewhat more concrete terms. It cannot be right that the regional governments have to submit to what the federal government decides. The parties in office in both have to accept that constitutional reality and act accordingly.

Verhofstadt: BHV was trap for federal government

Weekend interviews with Prime Minister Verhofstadt and with Interior Minister Dewael added fuel to the fire

On 13 May the federal government under Guy Verhofstadt (VLD) again received a vote of confidence from the ‘purple’ majority in the House and could get to work again after the fiasco of the splitting of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency. In the Flemish Government on the other hand the situation remained tense. Weekend interviews with Prime Minister Verhofstadt in De Morgen and with Interior Minister Dewael in Gazet van Antwerpen only added fuel to the fire. In De Zevende Dag on the VRT, Flanders was able to watch a heated debate between N-VA chairman Bart De Wever and VLD parliamentary party leader in the Flemish Parliament Patricia Ceyssens. The position of the VLD politicians is that CD&V, the party leading the Flemish Government but in the opposition at federal level, only wanted to provoke a crisis over the splitting of the Brussels-Halle-Vilvoorde constituency in order to bring down the federal government. Prime Minister Verhofstadt regards it as ‘blatantly unfair’ that Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) should have accused him of breaking his word. In the meantime, the tough standpoints adopted by the senior Liberal politicians are not doing the atmosphere in the Flemish Government any good. (FF).

BART EECKHOUT/LIESBETH VAN IMPE • DE MORGEN • 14 MAY

Verhofstadt hits out fiercely at his Flemish peer Yves Leterme. Verhofstadt calls it ‘utter nonsense’ that Leterme should criticise his coalition partners for breaking their word because they could not force a split of B-H-V. ‘Lying is not a political term, but what is being stated there is wholly contrary to the truth’, says Verhofstadt. ‘When the agreement was signed it was already stated clearly that we would not let the federal government fall. The text in the Flemish coalition agreement was only aimed at increasing the pressure on the Francophones. Therefore nobody can say that we have repudiated our signature’. Verhofstadt suspects that in the B-H-V affair the CD&V was manoeuvring to trip up the federal government. ‘CD&V chairman Jo Vandeurzen appeared on television a few days ago to say that the split had to happen without a single concession to the Francophones. Hey, do I have to spell it out? CD&V did not want an agreement at all. They wanted to make the government fall and remove Verhofstadt from the Rue de la Loi 16.’ And Verhofstadt goes on: ‘Via the Flemish Government attempts are being made to wreck the federal government. The problem for CD&V is that we have not let ourselves be caught in that trap. OK, we did not succeed in splitting B-H-V, but the opposition did not succeed, either, in bringing down the government’.

In the same interview Verhofstadt suggests that the agreement on B-H-V that was shot down was nowhere near as bad for Flanders as coalition partner Spirit is saying. ‘That the Francophones should want to pay for their education in the Periphery themselves from now on – is that improper for Flanders? I don’t know. It’s a question of twenty schools, plus a couple of crèches and old people’s homes. That’s Flanders’ “great clearance sale” (as the CD&V claims, ed.)’. WWW.PREMIER.FGOV.BE

focus on flanders • 14 May - 20 May 2005 • Number 20
Underprivileged given more educational opportunities in adjusted decree

The Decree on Equal Opportunities in Education (GOK), dating from 2002, was ripe for some adjustments. The original aim of the decree was to put an end to ‘white schools’ (those with few immigrant children) and ‘concentration schools’ (those with a majority of immigrant children). But the principle of the absolute right to enrol (those who enrol first gain admission) is not working in practice. Privileged families are still managing to get their children enrolled first. Exceptions have hitherto only been made for brothers and sisters and for a small number of Dutch speakers in Brussels schools. The new adjustment should see to it that underprivileged families are also given more of a chance. Flemish schools may now introduce an enrolment period to give priority to underprivileged children. The main theme of the new draft decree tabled by Education Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SP.A) is diversity (FF).

ILSE DE VOOGHT • DE TIJD • 14 MAY

At the moment three grounds for refusal and two grounds for referral are possible in enrolment. A pupil may be rejected if he does not meet the admission conditions, if the school is full, or if the schools had already previously turned him down. A referral is possible in the case of a pupil who is oriented towards special education, at least if the school’s capacity has been exceeded. And a school may also refer on a pupil who does not speak Dutch at home if it already has a certain percentage of children who do not speak Dutch at home. That percentage is set by the local consultative platforms. The schools may make referrals if they already have 10% more pupils than the percentage fixed by the consultative platform for its working area. In the new regulation the grounds for refusal remain the same, but the referrals are done away with. Instead of these, a school may simply refuse a pupil who is oriented towards special education, if it feels that its capacity is insufficient to meet this pupil’s educational needs.

Much more far-reaching is the replacement of the referral in the event of the language spoken at home not being Dutch by new rules of preference. The priority for brothers and sisters remains. In addition, a school may also reserve an enrolment period for so-called ‘GOK children’. These are children who do not speak Dutch at home, who belong to the travelling population (e.g., gypsies), whose mother does not have a secondary school diploma or whose parents have to manage on a replacement income. The school may itself decide how many places it reserves for these children. Giving priority to non-GOK children is also possible, but only for schools that are 10% above the regional average in GOK pupils. In Brussels the priority arrangement for Dutch speakers is being adapted. Schools may give Dutch-speaking children priority provided that the local consultative platform (LOP) has fixed the percentage. If the LOP has not established any percentage, a school can give priority to up to 25% of the Dutch-speaking pupils.

www.ond.vlaanderen.be
www.frankvandenbroucke.be

Visa affair, a squib with delicate consequences

Of the 19 senior city civil servants and officers of the local police who got themselves talked about two years ago in the Antwerp Visa affair, the Antwerp Chamber (magistrates deciding on the release of persons under remand or the extension of the warrant for their arrest) has finally decided that only three should appear before the court on counts of ‘misappropriation’ and ‘forgery’. The three in question are former town clerk Fred Noll, his deputy and a secretary. The 19 suspects are alleged to have run up unlawful expenses using their city or police-force Visa card and then covered this up. However, the Chamber judged that at the time there was no clear description of the costs that they could claim with their credit cards and that most of them did not have any intention of falsifying. However, the public prosecutor’s office is not submitting to the judgement and is appealing. Those temporarily exonerated also include Luc Lamine, former chief of the Antwerp police force. He remains only suspended until four months after the end of the legal proceedings (FF).

Opinion

LEX MOLENAAR • GAZET VAN ANTWERPEN • 19 MAY

When the judicial authorities decided last year not to take action against the senior Antwerp politicians involved, you could already guess what the next chapter in the story would be. For why would the court not prosecute the big fish, yet take action against the small fry? Nonetheless, there is considerable disappointment at the public prosecutor’s office. For two years detectives have tried to press an extremely complex, politically imbued affair into a judicial case. Because they, too, felt that things happened here that cannot be tolerated. At the time of the facts there was still no Office for Integrity and no code of conduct for civil servants, but these came into being precisely as a result of the spending pattern of some city officials that got out of hand. Where will things go from here? If the judgement is confirmed in the Court of Appeal, Luc Lamine and the others can demand their jobs back. But it is no secret that the current mayor and aldermen would rather jump into the Scheldt than agree to that. The judgement in criminal law is one thing, but the bench can argue that quite a number of the deeds committed do not square with the exemplary position of top-ranking civil servants.
Remmery case: new threatening letter

There is no panic among the customers, chiefly supermarkets. They rely on the quality control at Remmery

FF EDITOR

In the case of the threatening letters sent to the delicatessen company Remmery, no real progress has been made since the arrest of suspect Bernard D, whose wife, Marijke VD, worked at Remmery and had a conflict with her colleague Naïma Amzil. DNA from Bernard D’s sweat was found on one of the stamps on the letters, but this onus of proof proved insufficient to convince the court to continue to keep the suspect in detention. BD was released on 17 May by the Court’s indictment division in Ghent. Investigators have still not been able to determine the origin of another trace of DNA found on various letters. BD is still suspected of involvement in the writing of the threatening letters.

De Morgen reports that it knows that there are increasing indications that the manager of the company, Rik Van Nieuwenhuyze, had a fleeting relationship with Marijke VD, BD’s wife. Since these rumours surfaced, Van Nieuwenhuyze and employee Naïma Amzil avoid meetings with the press. The judicial authorities are now looking into whether a love affair could have driven Marijke VD to revenge. Another threatening letter addressed to Remmery arrived at the editorial offices of Het Nieuwsblad and Het Laatste Nieuws on 18 May. In it the letter writer says that the firm’s products have twice been contaminated with mercury, and that manager Rik Van Nieuwenhuyze knows this but has kept silent about it. Manager Rik Van Nieuwenhuyze is accused of collaborating with the new manure action plan. 'He isn’t even taking on any more Flemings and is therefore a danger for Flanders'. The threatening letter concludes with the words that the attacks with mercury and needles will continue until Rik Van Nieuwenhuyze shuts down his company Remmery. The author signs with the letters NVV-DG, whereby NVV stands for Nieuw Vrij Vlaanderen (New Free Flanders). This eighth letter could not possibly have been written by Bernard D, since he was still in prison when it was sent. But this does not in any way exonerate him. The letter writer’s assertion that foodstuffs at Remmery had previously been poisoned is denied by manager Van Nieuwenhuyze (De Morgen, 19 May). There is no panic among the customers, either, who are chiefly supermarkets. According to spokesman for major customer Delhaize, the quality control at Remmery was checked after the seventh letter and found to be watertight.

Why not send Flemish manure to Walloon farmers?

There is a good chance that the European authorities will force Flanders to substantially extend the number of vulnerable areas

New figures from the Flemish Environment Company (VMM) reveal that the nitrate concentration in watercourses as a result of over-manuring exceeded the European norm of 50mg nitrate/litre this winter at 41% of the 800 measurement points. Compared with last winter that is in fact a slight improvement, but in respect of 2002-2003 the trend remains predominantly negative. In that year the standards were exceeded at 32% of the measurement points. Nitrate seeps into the water when fields are over-manured. It removes the oxygen from the water and harms life in the water. Environment Minister Kris Peeters (CD&V) realises that steps have to be taken. The nitrate contamination is peaking again in particular in the agriculturally intensive province of West Flanders (FF).

HET NIEUWSBLAD • 18 MAY

Minister Peeters wants to sit down with the VMM, the Manure Bank, the farming organisations and the environmental movement. He has already instructed the VMM to look into ways in which stockbreeders can be ‘encouraged’ to assume their responsibility. It is one of the key points of Peeters’ new manure action plan, which is due to come into force next year. This is also a sensitive issue for Agriculture Minister and Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V), who is popular with farmers. There is a good chance that the European authorities will force Flanders to substantially extend the number of vulnerable areas (where manure may no longer be spread). That may result in a compulsory new reduction in the number of pigs and/or pig farms. A censure by Europe cannot be far off, says Jan Turf of the Association for a Better Environment (Bond Beter Leefmilieu). 'The question is only how much time Peeters and the farming sector will be given to placate Europe with the new manure action plan'. One problem is that there is too much manure in West Flanders and it costs too much to export it. 'If Walloon farmers were allowed to receive Flemish manure, 75% of the problem would be solved. It is a purely political problem, for the Walloon farmers want Flemish pig manure, which is much cheaper than artificial fertiliser. But the norms governing “exports” to Wallonia are much stricter than those for exports to France’, as farming expert Luc Busselschaert explains.

WWW.VMM.BE

New Figures:

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Source: HET NIEUWSBLAD

JUSTICE AND AGRICULTURE

FIGHT AGAINST RACISM

Manure Surplus

Focus on Flanders • 14 May - 20 May 2005 • Number 20
Recticel seeks partner for car interiors division

The polyurethane processing company Recticel (insulation, car interiors, mattresses, etc.) is building a new plant in the United Kingdom for the production of hard polyurethane insulation sheets for the construction industry. The factory should be up and running by mid-2007, according to managing director Luc Van Steenkiste, speaking at the annual general meeting of shareholders. The market demand for insulation is growing on account of the Kyoto agreement, which obliges the building sector to provide for better insulation. However, the rise in raw materials prices for polyurethane led to the company making a loss in the second half of 2004. For its car interior upholstery with polyurethane division (the jewel in the company’s crown), Recticel is looking for a partner.

According to Van Steenkiste the company can no longer cope with the stream of offers from car manufacturers. It makes no difference whether it is an industrial or financial partner. The most important thing is for the new joint venture to be able to defray the costs of the huge investments involved in every new order, says the former chairman of the Federation of Belgian Businesses (VBO) (FF).

GUY VANDEN BROEK • DE TIJD • 18 MAY

‘In the last three years Recticel has invested some EUR 100 million per year, in particular to sell new technology for interior car upholstery worldwide. But Recticel can no longer keep up with that tempo. Last year the company was forced to contract additional loans. This year we have already reduced the investments to EUR 45 to 50 million,’ said Luc Van Steenkiste. Last year the company tested the option of selling this technology via licences. Thus far one licence has been granted, and negotiations are still under way with another partner. But Recticel cannot keep up with demand via this method either. Therefore it is now seeking a solution for this dilemma via a partner. Van Steenkiste concedes that working with a partner will offer Recticel the opportunity to solve some of its financial problems. After all, the partner will have to bring in money. Recticel is struggling with a substantial debt burden and accords the highest priority to debt reduction. The expansion of the interior upholstery division has cost a great deal of money in the last few years due to the start-up costs occasioned by each new project. This has resulted in the interest-bearing financial liabilities rising sharply at Recticel, from EUR 248.6 to 295.5 million in 2004. This has led to liabilities exceeding equity capital (EUR 281.3 million) for the first time.

WWW.RECTICEL.BE

A lot of repatriated money held in sight accounts

The total financial wealth of Belgian families (shares, liquid assets, fixed-rate securities and insurance) rose last year by 6% to EUR 719.6 billion. This growth is largely attributable to the share portfolios, reports De Tijd (14 May). These rose by 45% to EUR 56.9 billion. A third of this is thanks to new investments, and two-thirds to the rise in share prices, according to calculations by the National Bank. The National Bank also drew the striking conclusion that in the first quarter of this year private individuals and companies deposited no less than EUR 15.8 billion more in sight accounts held with Belgian banks. The Bank suspects that this increase is largely repatriated undeclared or semi-declared money, which has found its way back to Belgium outside the terms of the official laundering regulation. The repatriation has occurred out of a concern over the European savings directive which obliges the EU Member States, from 1 July, to provide the tax authorities with information on fixed-rate investments held abroad. Luxembourg, Belgium and Austria do not provide information, but levy a 15% withholding tax (FF).

WOUTER VERVENNE • DE TIJD • 16 MAY

The money in Belgian sight accounts rose in the first quarter of 2005 from EUR 100.2 to 116 billion. Savings accounts in Belgium also grew in the first quarter by some EUR 5 billion to EUR 154.3 billion. ‘A great many investors are transferring their undeclared or semi-declared savings held abroad to a safe in Belgium and are then depositing the money, bit by bit, in their sight account’, say well-placed sources. By splitting up the amount they are trying to escape the reporting obligation of banks in respect of large or suspicious transactions.

The National Bank (NBB) points out that the explosive growth in sight accounts also has to do with the attitude of companies, which are keeping large amounts of cash, among other things because of the poor economic climate. The National Bank’s financial accounts show that Belgian private individuals brought back no less than EUR 9.8 billion in the last quarter of 2004. Last year, too, a part of the repatriation thus happened via devious means. The tax amnesty, which made it possible to launder foreign savings officially, only resulted in EUR 5.7 billion coming back to Belgium.

Infringements and fines in the new Traffic act (IN EURO)

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Source: HET LAATSTE NIEUWS

focus on FLANDERS • 14 May - 20 May 2005 • Number 20
Amendments tone down the new traffic act

Twenty-two infringements drop to a lower category and the fine is also reduced in many cases

On 1 March last year the new Traffic Act came into force. The hefty fines for serious offences led to vociferous protests, and parts of the Act were annulled by the Court of Arbitration. Therefore the Act has undergone swift appraisal and adjustment. The evaluation was carried out by Transport Minister Renaat Landuyt (SP.A), together with the police, the public prosecutor's office and interest groups (the Cyclists' Association, the motorists' association, the Flemish Automobile Association VAB, etc.). The three categories of severe offences alongside the ordinary offences have been replaced by four categories of offences, according to the level of risk that they constitute of causing an accident. Twenty-two infringements drop to a lower category and the fine is also reduced in many cases. Infringements of the second category drop from EUR 150 to EUR 100, infringements of the third category from EUR 175 to EUR 150. The minimum fine for an infringement of fourth category offences is slashed from EUR 550 to EUR 220. A multi-stage system is being introduced for speeding fines (FF) (Graph p 6).

TOM YSEBAERT • DE STANDAARD • 14 MAY

Van Hove and Versweyveld receive awards in New York

The Flemish theatre director Ivo van Hove won four Obie Awards in New York on 16 May, for his direction of the Henrick Ibsen play 'Hedda Gabler' at the New York Theatre Workshop (NYTW). The prestigious awards are presented annually by the weekly paper The Village Voice. In addition to two Obies for best leading roles in the piece, played by Jason Butler Harner and Elisabeth Marvel, van Hove himself won the Obie for best direction. Designer Jan Versweyveld, van Hove's partner in life and permanent scenographer, received the Obie Award for best scenography. This was not the first time that Ivo van Hove had won an Obie Award, having had the honour in 1998 for the direction of Eugene O'Neill's 'More stately Mansions' (Rijkeamanshuis), also at the NYTW.

Next season Van Hove and Versweyveld will be starting work on a production of Wagner's tetralogy 'Der Ring des Nibelungen' for the Flemish Opera. In June 2006 we will be able to see their version of 'Das Rheingold'. Van Hove has already worked in the Netherlands for some time. From 1990 to 2000 he was artistic director at the Zuidelijk Toneel (Southern Drama Company) which has its home base in Eindhoven. In 1998 he became director of the Holland Festival and since 2001 he has combined that job with the artistic directorship of the Toneelgroep Amsterdam (Amsterdam Drama Group) (FF).

GEERT SELS • DE STANDAARD • 17 MAY
“deconstructionist”’. Van Hove says that the innovative feature about Hedda Gabler was that the production was no longer a nineteenth-century play by Ibsen. All clichés about the characters were removed. Jan Versweyfheld arranged the entire theatre space as one large loft, so that the public was sitting in Hedda’s room with her.

**Diary**

**MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE**

• 26 to 29 May: Raga for the Rainy Season / A Love Supreme by Rosas/Anne Theresa De Keersmaecker, dance, music by John Coltrane and Sulochana Brahamani, Hallen van Scharbeek, info: www.dcmunt.be


• 30 May: Double concerto with M. Ward and Maximilian Hecker (USA), Handelsbeurs, Ghent, info: www.handelsbeurs.be 09 265 91 65.

• 31 May: Marianne Faithful, Royal Circus, Brussels, info: 0900/260 60

• 31 May and 1 June: Gli Amori d’Apollo e di Dafne by Francesco Cavalli, conductor: Gabriel Garrido, concertgebouw, Bruges, info: www.concertgebouw.be 070/23.33 02

• 2 June: The Soundtrack of our lives (Swe- den) Handelsbeurs, Ghent, info: www.handelsbeurs.be 09 265 91 65

• 2 June: Fat Metheny Group, Ancienne Bel- gique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

• 3 June: Nitin Sawhney, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

• 4 June: Oasis, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

• 7 June: Prefuse 73 live band, Ancienne Bel- gique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

• 8 June: Billy Corgan, concert, De Vooruit, Gent, info: www.vooruit.be 09 267 28.28

• 10 June: Henry Rollins, Ancienne Belgique, Brussels, info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

50 Years in the Making, exhibition by Els Dietvorst, Bozar, Brussels, info: www.bozar.be

• Until 25 May: Wrong time, wrong place, exhibition In Flanders Fields Museum, Ypres; info: 057 23 92 20 www.inflandersfields.be

• Until 19 June: Airworld, design and architect-ure in aviation, Design museum, Ghent; info: www.design.museum

• Until 17 May: Shakuhachi, Brussels; info: www.shakuhachi.be

• 26 May: de Filharmonie conducted by Philip Herreweghe with Beethoven, violin concerto and symphony nr. 6, Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.bijloke.be (09 233 68 78)

• Until 28 May: Ville en soie, directed by Jozef fruit, KVS, Brussels; info: www.kvs.be

• 29 May: Ron Sexsmith (Canada) songwriter, Handelsbeurs, Ghent, info: www.handelsbeurs.be 09 265 91 65.

• 26 to 29 May: Lido, Royal Brussels; info: www.lido.be 09 265 91 65.

• 30 May: Hedda Gabler was that the production was no longer a nineteenth-century play by Ibsen. All clichés about the characters were removed. Jan Versweyfheld arranged the entire theatre space as one large loft, so that the public was sitting in Hedda’s room with her.

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Editor in chief: Frank Van de Vace"