Leterme continues to rule out any cooperation with Belang

CD&V members entering into a coalition agreement with the Vlaams Belang will be removed from the party. This was the message from the Flemish Minister-President Yves Leterme (CD&V) in comments made on the occasion of the visit by Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende. Leterme leaves no doubt about it under no condition may a mandatary of his party enter into a coalition with Vlaams Belang after 8 October. If he does, he will in any case not be doing so as a CD&V mayor (FF).

WOUTER VERSCHELDEN • DE STANDAARD • 17 MARCH

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INTRODUCTION

The Vlaams Belang has been out of the media spotlight for months. But now, in the space of a week, the anti-immigration party is back on all the front pages, for the municipal elections are gradually taking hold of the political establishment. The discussion has flared up over the question as to whether candidates running for mayor should allow the extreme right-wing party (which was censured for racism in 2004) into a coalition. In the event of extreme need, i.e. if the municipalities’ risks become unmanageable, in line with the only alternative is a monster coalition of all ‘democratic parties’, they can, says CD&V mayor of Schoten Harrie Hendriks. Some 16 other Flemish mayors follow his line of thinking on the issue, as revealed by a survey in Het Laatste Nieuws (16 March). Nonetheless, they do not know exactly if these talks were to lead to an actual coalition with the VB. In the Christian-Democratic CD&V and the Liberal VLD, all such governmental cooperation is mercilessly punished with exclusion, and for the left-wing SPA cooperation is quite simply inconceivable. Other mayors explicitly say that they don’t regard the cordon sanitaire around the Belang – an agreement between the other parties not in any circumstances to conclude coalition agreements with the VB - as a good idea, but follow the parties nonetheless. They feel that the Belang should urgently be given a share in office, even if only to stop its electoral advance. They hope that in this way the party will ‘get burned’, as Haider’s FPÖ did in Austria. They feel that the cordon sanitaire has yielded benefit for the party without it having to make any effort. And yet the public ‘outright’ of these mayors is often also prompted by opportunism, warns Het Laatste Nieuws and De Morgen. They know that they gain popularity by ignoring the meddlesomeness of the party leadership. After all, polls show that more than half the voting public is against the continued enforcement of the cordon sanitaire.

Off the record more and more national politicians are also conceding that the cordon sanitaire has failed. The official party line of CD&V, VLD and SPA says that cooperation is impossible because the ideas espoused by the Belang are diametrically opposed to ours. But it is clear that for CD&V and VLD there is another very different reason for ruling out cooperation, in the view of De Tijd (15 March). Both parties are aware that they would be signing their own political death sentence the moment they started cooperating with the VB. If CD&V entered into a coalition with the Vlaams Belang, the powerful Christian labour movement ACW would immediately turn its back on it. ACW chairman Renders said that clear again in no uncertain terms, on 16 March. The same would happen in the VLD: figureheads such as Verhofstadt, Devaer, De Gucht and De Croo would immediately leave, according to De Tijd.

This means that the two parties are squeezed between what they want and what is feasible for the party. They can do little more than ensure good administration during their term in office and hope that the cordon sanitaire does not turn into the main issue at stake in the elections, says De Tijd.

Frank Vandeveeye | editor in chief
Employers who recruit unemployed over-50s after 1 April, can receive a Flemish employment bonus during the first year, which varies between 400 and 1,000 euros per month, depending on the employee's salary. The measure was adopted on 10 March in the Flemish Government. It was introduced to increase the low employment rate among people over 50. Barely 43.8% of people between 50 and 65 years old still work in Flanders. The bonus is to pull job seekers out of their long-term unemployment. Employment Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SP.A) explained. The greatest brake on the recruitment of people over 50 is precisely the high remuneration costs for older employees. The bonus is to considerably reduce said remuneration costs. Employers must act quickly: bonuses will be available until the 22 million euro budget is exhausted. The Flemish Government approved the bonus on 10 March. It is the first measure of the Flemish multiple job plan to become effective (FF).

YVES LAMBRIX • HET BELANG VAN LIMBURG
11 MARCH

‘Employers often see the high wage cost of older employees as a stumbling block’, says Flemish Employment Minister Frank Vandenbroucke (SP.A). ‘With this major wage cost reduction, we want to remove this handicap during the first year, for the number of unemployed older persons keeps growing.’ On an annual basis the employer could save EUR 5,000, 8,400 or 12,000 if he recruits one such older unemployed person. Conditions will be attached to the granting of the subsidy, however. For example, it should relate to a permanent contract and the employee in question must be employed for at least a year and a quarter. Dismissing an employee in order to take on someone aged over fifty is not allowed, and the subsidy will be claimed back if improper use is made of it. For the subsidy the Flemish Government has made provision for a budget of EUR 22 million and EUR 30 million from 2007 onwards.

Sixteen mayors want to talk to the Vlaams Belang

Of the 308 mayors in Flanders, sixteen answered in the affirmative to the question as to whether they would want to negotiate with the extreme right wing Vlaams Belang mandataries after 8 October. This emerges from the findings of a survey conducted by Het Laatste Nieuws (16 March). The mayor of Schoten Harrie Hendrickx had already conceded earlier this week that he was prepared to do just that. The debate looks like causing a rupture of the cordon sanitaire, despite the sanctions for dissident mayors which the national party leaders of both the Christian-Democrats (CD&V) and the Liberals (VLD) are threatening to impose. Seven CD&V and three VLD mayors are prepared to talk to the Vlaams Belang. But mayors on independent lists, who are not answerable to any party leadership, are the ones who express their views most freely. The most oft’ heard arguments are that, as democrats, they want to talk to everyone and that they would rather talk to the Vlaams Belang than make the municipality ungovernable (FF).

Opinion

STEVEN SOMERS • HET LATSTE NIEUWS
16 MARCH

More than ever the question is raised: are the VLD and CD&V party chair-
CD&V mayor does no longer exclude a coalition with Vlaams Belang

If necessary, he would prefer a coalition with Vlaams Belang to the establishment of a ‘monster coalition’ with socialists, liberals and greens.

The CD&V-mayor of the Antwerp town Schoten, Harrie Hendrickx, refuses to sign a declaration of commitment distributed by his party that excludes any administrative collaboration with the far right Vlaams Belang party. If necessary, he would prefer a coalition with Vlaams Belang to the establishment of a ‘monster coalition’ with socialists, liberals and greens. A coalition with left-wing, centre and right-wing parties would make his town ungovernable, he believes. If Vlaams Belang is to take part in the municipal executive, Hendrickx would prefer to invite the liberal VLD as well, he said. In the ‘brown belt’ around Antwerp, where Vlaams Belang is the most popular political party, the idea of the cordon sanitaire seems to be fading. CD&V and VLD party executives, however, are refusing to budge from their position. Those party members who dare to collaborate with Vlaams Belang after the municipal elections will be thrown out of the party. The question remains as to how long party executives will be able to smother the debate within the party. This discussion is the best election campaign Vlaams Belang could dream of, Het Laatste Nieuws believes. And so the first major theme of the campaign is born (FF).

BART BRINCKMAN • DE STANDAARD • 14 MARCH

The municipal elections are still a long way off. However, it is already clear at this early stage that the possible maintaining of the cordon sanitaire will play an important part in the campaign. CD&V-chairman Jo Vandeurzen yesterday immediately reprimanded the mayor of Schoten Harrie Hendrickx, who does not rule out a coalition with Vlaams Belang under certain conditions. In a great many town halls, with ramifications reaching as far as the Rue de la Loi, there is currently a conspicuous shadow dance being played out. Support for the cordon sanitaire - the exclusion of the Vlaams Belang from governing coalitions - is crumbling. The tactic dating from the beginning of the 1990s has not curbed that party’s advance. Yet not a single politician dares to really broach the matter. Out of fear for their lives, CD&V and VLD are not giving an inch in public either. The three parties have in common the fact that they promptly remove from their ranks any party member who considers the idea of cooperating with the Belang. CD&V chairman Jo Vandeurzen rebuked mayor Hendrikx and reminded him of the declaration of commitment that every Christian-Democratic mandatory has to sign and which excludes cooperation on pain of dismissal. There must be some doubt as to whether CD&V Vandeurzen can stifle the debate. Hendrickx is only proclaiming what more and more Flemings are thinking. A poll recently showed that almost 60% of Antwerp residents have no problems with the idea of Vlaamse Belang having a share in office in Antwerp. The Vlaams Belang is quite happy that the debate is bubbling up, since it gives the extreme right wing the chance to complain that the political establishment is failing to respect the rights of a democratic minority.

www.cdv.be
Beaulieu Kruishoutem to launch a bid for Associated Weavers

FROM A PURELY STRATEGIC POINT OF VIEW THE MERGER IS A LOGICAL MOVE

The carpet manufacturer Associated Weavers International, from Ronse in East Flanders, announced on 14 March that the principal shareholder had agreed to the sale of their shares at EUR 11 to the raw materials division of Beaulieu Kruishoutem. The principal shareholders control 38% of AWI, and Beaulieu Kruishoutem is launching a public bid for the rest of the shares at the same price. Beaulieu Kruishoutem is AWI’s largest raw materials supplier, supplying it with nylon threads for carpets. The cooperation was therefore obvious. Stephan Colle, manager of Beaulieu Kruishoutem, is married to Ann De Clerck, one of the children who together inherited the Beaulieu empire from their father Roger. Colle also has a 22% stake in Beaulieu International Group (BIG), the merger company that was recently formed from four of the six divisions of the Beaulieu empire (FF).

GERDA ACKAERT • DE TIJD • 15 MARCH

From a purely strategic point of view the impending merger of AWI with the raw materials division of Beaulieu Kruishoutem is a logical move. Of all Belgian carpet operators AWI is the least vertically integrated. At the time that was a conscious choice for AWI. But as more and more independent yarn producers have been subsumed into larger entities in recent years, the strategy of non-integration began to show its limitations. ‘To safeguard the supply of raw materials, AWI had to do something’, explains Dries Bossuyt, managing director of AWI, who also remains in the post after the takeover.

In practice the announced operation amounts to an absorption of AWI by the Belgian raw materials division of Beaulieu Kruishoutem. The East Flanders establishment accounts for a turnover of EUR 80 to 100 million and employs 160 people. The main activity of the plant in Kruishoutem is the production of polymers. Some of these polymers are sold in unprocessed form to third parties, which are companies outside the carpet sector. The rest is processed into nylon thread for the carpet sector. AWI is the largest buyer of this nylon thread. If AWI’s shareholders accept the offer, AWI will become a company that is largely vertically integrated, just like most other companies in its sector.

Stephan Colle, who holds 22% of the shares in the merger company Beaulieu International Group (BIG), did not bring his entire group into BIG. ‘The foreign establishments in South Africa, South America and Australia and the Belgian production of polymers were kept outside the merger operation announced last year’, explains Christophe Deroose, Beaulieu International’s CEO.

WWW.ASSOCIATEDWEAVERS.BE

Punch International interested in taking over Smart

Flemish technology firm Punch International is said to want to take over an interest in loss-making car manufacturer Smart, a branch of Daimler Chrysler, De Tijd reports. Daimler Chrysler hired merchant bank Goldman Sachs to look for a buyer for Smart. Punch would take an interest of nearly 50%. Punch’s main intention would be to make Smart profitable as quickly as possible and to upgrade the small-sized car by integrating its own telematics applications. However, plans are supposed to exist for the construction of a hybrid version of the Smart, with both an electrical and petrol engine. De Tijd also indicates that Punch has major experience in the field of car manufactur-}

ing. Punch owns plants in Slovakia where dashboards are produced, whereas Punch Telematics is a major telematics manufacturer for vehicles (FF).

FREDERIC PETITJEAN • DE STANDAARD • 15 MARCH

Punch is already active in the car sector. The company already manufactures a large number of plastic parts in Eastern Europe for the local car industry. In our country Punch owns OVP (a Neerfeld-based plastics processing company and supplier to the car industry) and Inalfa (a manufacturer of metal car parts based in North Limburg). The company is also strong in telematics, via companies that it has taken over, such as Acunia and ICS. These companies’ technology can be very handy, for example, in ensuring that cars receive a signal from a satellite when driving into a city, so that they switch over automatically from petrol engine to electric engine. Asked for a reaction, Guido Dumarey was very sparing with his comments. ‘I think it’s a great shame that this has leaked out now’, he said. ‘Everyone knows that we have ambitions, but the timing is very unfortunate. The relationship of trust that we have built up with the other parties has now been damaged. This report has come far too early’. Those who did react enthusiastically with their comments. ‘I think it’s a great shame that this has leaked out now’, he said. ‘Everyone knows that we have ambitions, but the timing is very unfortunate. The relationship of trust that we have built up with the other parties has now been damaged. This report has come far too early’. Those who did react enthusiastically to the news were the investors. After the report was made public, the Punch share price rose a good 8% to EUR 87.5.

WWW.PUNCHINTERNATIONAL.COM

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SOURCE: DS-INFOGRAFIE
High Council for Diamonds on the road to recovery

The new executive board is a first step in Federal Prime Minister Verhofstadt’s plan to save the diamond sector

The High Council for Diamonds (HRD), which has been paralysed for some time as a result of a flaming row between small and large diamond dealers, has a new executive board. The board was slimmed down from 20 to 12 board members. Half of them meet on behalf of the diamond trade. Among them there are two representatives for small (less than 30 million euros turnover), medium-sized (between 30 and 100 million euros turnover) and large traders (more than 100 million turnover). The other half of the council represents diamond fairs (3 representatives) and the industry (2 representatives). The last seat is taken up by an independent director. The socialist trade union is no longer represented.

The new executive board is a first step in Federal Prime Minister Verhofstadt’s plan to save the diamond sector. For a while heavyweights from the sector, Dilip Mehta and Chaim Pluczenik threatened with the creation of an alternative umbrella organisation, but that danger now seems to be averted (FF).

GEORGES TIMMERMAN • DE MORGENSE ARCH

14 MARCH

The main difference is that now half the directors are directly elected by all 1,600 registered, mainly small-scale diamond companies, and no longer by the thirteen professional federations that are members of the HRD and which together used to appoint twenty directors. This move is aimed at refuting the criticism that the HRD is an undemocratic association that chiefly favours the large diamond houses. The diamond trade’s umbrella organisation also has to become more transparent and provide a better reflection of the existing balance of power. One external independent director will also be brought in and the HRD is looking for a new director-general, to take over from Peter Meeus who walked out in discouragement at the beginning of the year. In a second phase of the restructuring plan, the idea is to split the HRD’s commercial activities and to have these subsumed in a separate legal entity.

Eighty percent of rough diamonds pass through Antwerp, but the city is experiencing increasing competition from Dubai and Bombay. The smaller diamond traders are under increasing pressure because De Beers, the largest supplier of rough diamonds, introduced a new marketing policy a few years ago which led to a third of Antwerp’s approval viewers (selected De Beers buyers) being dropped. What is more, there are tensions between the traditional Jewish community and the up-and-coming Indian diamond traders. Antwerp’s diamond traders also want a more flexible application of the customs procedures and the Kimberley process, i.e. the international agreements for the banning of conflict diamonds.

www.diamonds.be

On trade mission in South Africa: diamonds, ports and Olympic Games

Just as Flanders has a logistical ‘calling’ in Europe, so South Africa’s calling is as a ‘gateway to Africa’.

Prince Filip, Princess Mathilde, state secretary Vincent van Quickenborne and the Flemish Foreign Trade Minister, Fientje Moerman (VLD) this week led a 180-strong trade mission to South Africa. There they have to try to iron out things between the Antwerp High Council for the Diamond Trade and the large diamond producer De Beers. The senior managers of Flanders’ ports are also taking part in the mission. Just as Flanders has a logistical ‘calling’ in Europe, so South Africa’s calling is as a ‘gateway to Africa’. And finally Flanders hopes to get its share (in the form of contracts) of football’s World Cup which will be staged in South Africa in 2010 (FF).

BART HAECX • DE TIJD • 13 MARCH

Diamond trading is big business. Although Flanders is a diamond exporter, it actually imports more from South Africa than it exports to it. From every euro in imports from South Africa, 50 cents comes from precious stones. The expensive gems account for 7.5% of Flemish imports and exports. However, the trade mission relates to more than just that. Senior port executives such as Leo Delwaide (Antwerp), Daniël Tertmont (Ghent) and Joachim Coens (Zeebrugge) are also on the trip, together with a string of logistics companies. Their presence is all to do with Flanders’ and South Africa’s logistical calling. There are already a large number of contacts. ‘All ports in South Africa work with Hesse Natie logistical technology’, says Luc Luwel of the Flemish employers’ organisation Voka. Developing these contacts is now the message. ‘There are signs that South Africa wants to form a free trade area with the European Union in 2012’, adds Philippe Muyters, managing director of Voka.

But there will also be opportunities before 2012. In 2010 South Africa hosts football’s World Cup. That seems a long way off, but it isn’t, says Paul Anderson, Barco manager for viewing screens in sports stadiums. ‘South Africa urgently has to decide about contracts. It’s now or never.’ That has also not escaped the attention of the Olympic Business Club of employers’ organisation Agoria. With a seven-man delegation they are going to promote ‘sports articles’, from artificial grass matting produced by the Dendermonde company Desso to the technology for repeating live pictures in slow motion, offered by EVS.

www.evs.be/www.barco.be
www.diamonds.be
www.voka.be
De Gucht promises Fehriye Erdal extradition

Federal Foreign Minister Karel De Gucht revealed that Belgium is prepared to extradite DHKP-C militant Fehriye Erdal to Turkey as soon as she is caught. De Gucht confirmed that the abolition of the death penalty in Turkey and the conviction of Erdal in Belgium had fundamentally altered the situation. Belgium has previously refused to extradite Erdal on two occasions because it believed the Turkish request to be politically motivated. De Gucht had expressed this view at a meeting of EU Foreign Ministers in Salzburg. It was also here that he met Turkish colleague Abdullah Gül. Fehriye Erdal's lawyer, Paul Bekaert, is strongly opposed to the extradition. In his opinion, Mr De Gucht does not respect the judicial procedure. What is more, he fears that Erdal may be tortured and even murdered in Turkey (FF).

FILIP VERHOEST • DE STANDAARD • 13 MARCH

According to the Foreign Affairs Minister, Karel De Gucht (VLD), nothing stands in the way of an extradition of the DHKP-C militant to Turkey, assuming, of course, that the Belgian police manage to arrest her. At the beginning of February Turkey submitted a third request to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This time Turkey is asking for Erdal’s extradition on account of complicity in a ‘common-law murder’ of the senior industrialist Ozdemir Sabanci and two members of staff in 1996. In 2000 and 2003 Turkey already submitted a request for extradition for the same events, but then the DHKP-C militant was accused of complicity in ‘an attempt to overthrow the constitutional regime in Turkey’. According to the Belgian government, that was a crime of a clearly political nature. And in accordance with the European Extradition Treaty, Belgium does not extradite persons accused of political crimes. Turkey has also ratified that treaty.

Those circumstances remain unchanged, says lawyer Bekaert: ‘I do not understand why minister De Gucht is now claiming that an extradition is possible. The fact that the requesting country no longer describes the facts as a political crime but as murder makes no difference. Moreover, it is not the Foreign Affairs Minister who is competent, but the Justice Minister. De Gucht is speaking ahead of time, and I thank him for the procedural error he has thereby committed.’ Turkey’s latest extradition request still has a long way to go. Via the Foreign Affairs Ministry and the Justice Ministry, the request will first land up in the judge’s chambers. Then the court of appeal draws up a confidential opinion for the Justice Minister, who takes the final decision. Seldom does the government ignore the court of appeal’s advice. An additional reason why Belgium cannot extradite Erdal, says her lawyer, is that in Turkey she runs the risk of ‘inhumane treatment’, such as torture. ‘Another DHKP-C suspect was killed in prison.’

Lawyers of Erdal are appealing

Fehriye Erdal, the convicted far left Turkish DHKP-C militant, is appealing against her conviction as are most of the other incriminated DHKP-C members. Erdal, who has disappeared on the eve of her trial, was sentenced to four years of emprisonment. The Turkish woman was convicted of membership of a terrorist organisation, possession of arms and false passports. Musa Asoglu, the leader of the organisation in Belgium, who helped to escape Erdal and was sentenced to six years of imprisonment, is not appealing. He was arrested in the court after his conviction. The lawyers of Erdal refuse to say whether they had contact with Erdal or not, arguing they are bound by their duty of professional confidentiality. ‘The defence has a mandate to plead its client’s acquittal, they claim. Entering an appeal against the sentence is part of the mandate, they confirm.’

Asoglu’s lawyer, Jan Fermon, suspects that Foreign Affairs Minister De Gucht’s statement that nothing stands in the way of Erdal’s extradition, is ‘a plea to Erdal not to present herself with the request to sit out her sentence here’ (Knack, 15 March).

Robbery with murder of parents of Ferho improbable

In the case of the murdered parents of the Kurdish brothers Ferho, who reside in Belgium, the Turkish human rights organisation IHD, which investigated the murder on site in the Kurdish village, found a political settlement of accounts more likely than robbery with murder (De Morgen, 15 March). According to IHD, there is no direct proof that village guardsmen or secret commands of the Turkish army were behind the murders, but seven other unsolved murders in the village appear to point more to political motives. The couple were known as a Kurdish resistance family, many members of which had fled abroad. One of them, Derwish Ferho, runs the Kurdish Institute in Brussels. He puts Minister De Gucht’s claim that the perpetrators were perhaps ‘just village guardsmen’ in a very different perspective. ‘Village guardsmen’ operate in the region directly under the army’s authority, says Ferho. De Gucht concluded from an inquiry carried out by the Belgian embassy in Turkey that there were no indications supporting the theory that the Turkish authorities were involved in the murder.
FOOTBALL GAMBLING SCANDAL

Fresh confessions in Football gambling scandal

FF EDITOR

Gilbert Bodart, from October 2005 until February 2006 trainer of Walloon football club La Louvière, has confessed to playing a role in the gambling scandal that has recently afflicted the Belgian football championship. Following questioning by the federal police, Bodart has testified that he fixed several games in November, December and January at the orders of La Louvière club management and Chinese businessman Zheyun Ye. He told investigators that club solicitor Laurent Denis and player’s agent Pietro Allata, a relation of Ye, were key figures in the club management. Bodart claimed that he acted under constant threat from Ye.

He had to lose several games by heavy margins and apparently did so in games against Club Bruges, Westerlo and Ghent. Bodart himself was a gambling addict and had plunged into debt. Consequently he was easy prey for the Ye’s gambling mafia, who even made threats against him.

A member of the board of directors of La Louvière thinks that Bodart is lying about his small role in the gambling fraud. Bodart was the hub. He went to look for Ye in the Hilton Hotel in Brussels and he handed out the bribe money to the players according to the man who wishes to remain anonymous. He claims that La Louvière chairman Gaone was not aware of the bribe practices. Bodart was for La Louvière what Paul Put was for Lierse, according to the source. Bodart has in the meantime been given police protection. On Sunday 12 March his wife was cornered and threatened, probably by accomplices of Ye.

The investigating judicial services have also received a list of 800 Belgian gamblers from British bookmaker Betfair, who had placed bets on suspect matches.

In the meantime, the German Bundesliga is currently investigating a betting scandal that was organised in China. A key figure in this affair is a certain Mr Hong and according to television channel ARD there may be links with the Chinese mafia in Belgium.

The net is closing in on football club La Louvière and its dubious practices, even if investigations have so far uncovered more financial trickery than bribery. On 16 March federal police took in seven individuals for questioning and performed some twenty house searches. Among those questioned were La Louvière chairman Filippo Gaone, the right-hand man of player’s agent Allata, David Magri, club lawyer Laurent Denis and manager Chris Benoît. According to Het Laatste Nieuws [17 March], searches and questioning have revealed that chairman Gaone has been using club money for his private business. The sum of 2 million euros was found in his home. Gaone couldn’t remember where it had come from. Gaone claims he was merely following the advice of club lawyer Laurent Denis, who is alleged to have set up financial constructions to cover up Gaone’s financial transactions.

The federal public prosecutor issued an international warrant for the arrest of Zheyn Ye, the key figure in the betting scam, and Pietro Allata, the man who introduced Ye to Belgian Football.

TOOTS THIELEMANS RECEIVES HOMAGE IN CARNEGIE HALL

Next month Toots Thielemans will turn 84, but he’s still performing: sitting on a bar stool on the stage, in his shirtsleeves and braces, and with his inseparable harmonica at the ready. Toots, who comes from the Brussels popular district of the Marolles, is a living legend of jazz in the USA. In a career spanning sixty years he has played with all the very greatest figures in the history of jazz. On 16 March he performed in a memorable concert in Carnegie Hall together with his permanent pianist Kenny Werner and guitarist Oscar Castro-Neves. Jazz greats such as Herbie Hancock and Ivan Lins were also on the bill. Together they paid homage to Thielemans, under the title ‘The magic of Toots’ (FF).

According to the organisers of the concert it was high time to pay homage to Toots. ‘We noticed that one of the great legends in the jazz world had still not been celebrated properly in the United States, and that in the meantime he’s about to turn 84’, says Pat Philips, producer, together with Ettore Stratta, of ‘The magic of Toots’. Toots is popular among American jazz fans. He tours the US four or five times a year, each time for two or three weeks. In April he’s back again already for performances in Washington and Boston, among other cities. Last year he performed twice in New York’s Lincoln Center.

‘While in Belgium Toots is mainly known as the dear old grandpa who regularly appears on television, they know him in the US for his music’, says manager Gods. ‘Americans know the musicians Toots has played with. They also recognise his specific sound, since everyone has grown up with it. He is one of the musicians who played the tune used for the popular children’s programme ‘Sesame Street’.’ Producer Pat Philips describes Toots as ‘a passionate musician who brings his own particular warmth to the music. He has a vast musical knowledge, is a great improviser and a good composer.’ He is admired by many great musicians, not only jazz players but also pop musicians. So it is that he has worked with the likes of Paul Simon, Billy Joel and Quincy Jones.
Diary

MUSIC, DANCE, THEATRE

• 24 February to 21 March: Martin Arnold (Vienna, 1959) has established himself as one of the most brilliant of today's experimental filmmakers, Bozar, Brussels; www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 10 to 25 March: L'incoronazione di Poppea by Monteverdi, conductor: René Jacobs, director: David Mc Vicar, Opera, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.desingel.be 02/229 12 00

• 22 March: Mathilde Monnier and Centre chorégraphique de Montpellier, Frère et Soeur, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

• 22 March: Moskou Piano Trio with Rimski-Korsakov and Chostakovitch, Handelsbeurs, Ghent; info: www.handelsbeurs.be

• 22 March: Ars Antiqua Austria, Gunar Letzbor, violin and conductor

Heinrich Ignaz von Biber Rosenkranz-sonaten Nr. IX-XV, Miniemen Church, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 22 to 25 March: Drummer wanted, a play by Richard Maxwell, The New York City Players, theatre, Kaaitheaterstudio’s, Brussels; info: www.kaaitheater.be

• 22 March: Complete works for piano four hands by WA Mozart, Melvyn Tan and Ronald Brautigam, Concertgebouw, Bruges, www.concertgebouw.be

• 22 March: Stichting Baden-Baden and Freiburg, Danel String Quartet conducted by Sylvain Cambrelin with Helmut Lachenmann Tanzsuite mit Deutschlandland, Schreiber and Olivier Latry, Chronochrome, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 22 March: Toto, Vorst Nationalaal, Brussels; info: www.vooruit.be 09/267.28.28

• 22 March: Jim Black’s ‘Alas, No Axis’, theatre, Kaaitheaterstudiot, Vorst Nationaal, Brussels; info: www.vorstnationaal.be

• 22 March: The Gaudier Ensemble with Mozart and Schubert, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

• 23 March: Robin Verheyen Kwartet (Jazz), De Vooruit, Ghent; info: www.vooruit.be 09/267.28.28

• 23 March: Ars Antiqua Austria conducted by Gunar Letzbor with George Muffat, Benedict Anton Aufschnaiter and Rupert Ignaz Mayr, Minienen Church, Brussels; info: www.desingel.be 02/507.82.00

• 24 and 25 March: The Academy of Ancient Music conducted by Giuliano Carmignola, violin with Mozart, violin concertos, De Singel www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28, Antwerp and Concertgezhou, Bruges; www.concertgezhou.be

• 24 March: Salian Supa Crew, AB, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

• 24 March: Orchestre Symphonique de la Monnaie conducted by Conrado Rovaris, Maria Costanza Nocentini Soprano, Marina Comparative alto and Alfonso Veneroso narrator with Matteo d’Amico Stabat Mater and Giovanni Battista Pergolesi Stabat Mater, De Munt, Brussels; info: www.desingel.be

• 24 March: Orchestre National de l’ile de France conducted by الفرص Judd with Thomas Ades, William Walton and Felix Mendelssohn Bartholdy, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• 25 March: DefilHarmonie conducted by Ollari Elas and Storoni Trio with C. Ives, K. Volans and E. T. Tüür, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

• 25 March: Concertgebouworkest conducted by Peter Eötvös, Pierre-Laurent Aimard, piano with György Ligeti, Peter Eötvös, Peter-Jan Wagemans and Bela Bartok, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

• 26 March: Symphonic Orchesta of Flanders, conducted by David Adolfo Bartus with Liszt and Dvorak, De Bijloke, Ghent; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

• 26 March: Leipziger Deutsches Streichquartett with Hartmut Rohde [alt violin], with WA Mozart, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

EXPO

• Until 2008: Art at the Frontline 1914-1918, Royal Army and Military History Museum, Brussels, info: 02 737 78 33 www.klm-mra.be

• Until 30 April: Pain, exhibition, Museum Ghuislain, Ghent, www.museumghuislain.be

• Until the end of March: SMAX exhibitions: Franky DC, Henk Visch, Stefan Dheedene and Paul Collats, SMAX, Ghent, info: www.smax.be 09 221 17 03

• Until 23 April: Eugeen Joos, In Flanners Fields Museum, Ypres 057/239.220

• Until 24 June: Kitiklozen en denkmollen [Showcases and models of thought], Jan Fabre, exhibition, Flemish Parliament, Lokettenzaal, Brussels; info: www.vlaamsparlement.be

• Until 21 May: Theo Van Rysselberge, exhibition, Bozar, Brussels; info: www.bozar.be 02/507.82.00

• Until 23 April: The Collection XIV, exhibition, Mukha, Antwerp; info: www.mukha.be

• Until 30 April: Noli me tangere: Maria Magdalena in multiple, Library of theology, Louvain, www.theo.kuleuven.be

• Until 28 May: Yearning for Beauty, The Vienna Werkstätte, exhibition Bozar, Brussels, info: www.bozar.be


• 24 March to 2 April: Eurantica Brussels, Fine art & antiquities fair, Brussels, expo hall 5, info: www.eurantica.be

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CULTURE

• 27 March: Louise Attaque, Nationaal, Brussels, info: www.vorstnationaal.be

• 28 to 31 March: Anne Teresa De Keersmaeckers Salvach Sanchis, Rosas De Munt, Dese (the second part of the night), De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

• 28 March: Sourad Massi, AB, Brussels; info: www.abconcerts.be 02/548.24.24

• 28 March to 7 April: Il Barchiere di Seviglia by Paisiello, conductor: Rinaldo Alessandrini, director Omar Ponzas, Théâtre National, Brussels, info: www.desingel.be

• 29 and 30 March: Leopizger Streichquartett with Hartmut Rohde [alt violin], with WA Mozart, De Singel, Antwerp; info: www.desingel.be 03/248.28.28

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