This publication focuses on the performing arts in Flanders for young audiences. It contains information on the most important producers, a series of pictures of interesting projects with international potential, an overview of recent artistic developments, and a sketch that gives insight into the landscape’s organisation and the way in which performing arts for young audiences are made and appreciated. The book is intended thereby to provide an international readership with an overview of recent developments in this unique field, which, according to Jeremy Boomer Stacey (IPAY), might well be ‘the best kept secret in international performing arts for young audiences’.

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This publication focuses on the performing arts in Flanders for young audiences. It aims to give an international audience an overview of recent developments within this segment of the broader performing arts landscape in Flanders. The booklet contains information on the most important producers, a series of pictures of interesting projects with international potential, an overview of recent artistic developments, and a sketch that gives insight into the landscape’s organisation and the way in which performing arts for young audiences are made and appreciated. Thus we are responding to a growing demand from outside Belgium for good information on the work of Flemish performing artists and companies who work for and with children and youth.

Performing arts for and with young audiences is a field that is difficult to demarcate clearly in Flanders. The performing arts for young audiences in Flanders is not a field unto itself, but is part of a wider totality of production and presentation.

Many houses that focus on children and youth have an active policy of addressing makers from throughout the field and encouraging them to also create for a young audience. This results in a unique bundling of expertise: on the one hand, of producers with years of experience and know-how in working with young audiences. On the other hand, there is a continuous influx of new stories and perspectives, and ideas for translating these into new artistic forms. What all share is an aversion to all possible forms of patronising that aims to keep the ‘kids’ safely within the confines of ‘blue and pink clouds’. As is the case in the wider field, they are treated as autonomous and responsible persons, who themselves contribute to the process of giving meaning to what we see on stage. And not only as spectator. Given such an attitude, it is not surprising that many makers and companies work not only for but also with children and youth in their artistic processes.
The Flemish government too follows this logic. Unlike many other countries, the performing arts for young audiences do not exist for the Flemish government as a separate policy category. Within the Arts Decree, the most important Flemish legislation in support of the arts, most of the subsidised organisations active in this field are financed as organisations for Dutch-language dramatic arts. However, arts centres, organisations for dance and music theatre are also active in the production. The Arts Decree itself is characterised by a great openness. It contains almost no prescriptions. Makers and artists are free to decide if and when they will focus on children and youth.

This openness results in tremendous artistic possibilities, which in turn lead to a great diversity in productions. More and more productions are a cross-fertilisation of dance, music theatre, circus, film, new media ... And these can increasingly be seen at special locations: in the theatre and schools of course, but also on streets and squares, abandoned sites, even on buses and boats. Also remarkable is the growing attention in the theatre for infants. While in 2009, theatre for babies and toddlers was still viewed as a gap in need of filling, today the segment appears to be catching on.

These developments are not taking place in a vacuum. They are the result of an extremely interesting dialogue between the theatre and a society in full transformation. Due to their close collaboration with schools and cultural centres throughout the country, the children’s arts – much more so than the rest of the performing arts sector – is confronted with the changing cultural patterns of behaviour and frames of reference of tomorrow’s audience. This sheds a new light on for example the growing interdisciplinarity of the children’s arts. This is an attempt to tell new stories to a new audience in a different, less linguistic way.

In the landscape sketch below in this publication, red warning lights also appear. Diverse theatre for a diverse audience demands a thoroughgoing commitment on the part of many stakeholders: artists and producers, art education players, performing arts programmers, schools, teachers and teacher training, parents, the media and the various governments ... Not all links in the chain are equally well oiled. The market situation for example (limitations on the fees that can be charged for productions, shifts in local cultural policy and education, with limited opportunities to present as a result) inhibit innovation and experimentation.

From the perspective of society’s growing diversity, the children’s arts are in the vanguard. This is exciting and challenging, but also makes this part of the sector vulnerable.

Such discussions are not limited to the frontiers of the Flemish Community. Performing arts are increasingly being made and shared in a network that transcends borders. All the more reason to discuss these trends with an international public. The debate is hereby opened!

Joris Janssens
Director, VTi – Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders
Chicks for money and nothing for free – with & by Gilles De Schryver, Arend Pinoy, Oliver Roels, Yahya Terryn, Hendrik-Hein Van Doorn, Robrecht Vanden Thoren / KOPERGIETERY / het KIP © Phile Deprez
PART 1

OVERVIEW
Thank you for being here today and thanks to Gerhard for inviting me to share my perspective on Flemish performing arts for young audiences.

I have to tell you that I get nervous when someone asks me for my opinion – I’m not always sure what’s going to come out of my mouth until it does – so it’s not a natural process for me to sit down and write what I think about a certain topic, especially when the invitation goes something like this: ‘please come and tell a room full of Flemish artists what you think about their work as a whole ... we think that our work is among the best in the world so we’d like you to come and tell us what you think about it’. Not at all daunting (sarcasm!). This wasn’t exactly what Gerhard said to me, but you get the idea.

So please take this in the spirit of one person’s not-so-expert opinion: I’m not trying to make friends but certainly not trying to alienate my audience either.

Opinions obviously are formed through experience and contact, so I think it’s important to tell you a little bit about what I do and have done, so you understand where my perspective comes from.

I am the former artistic director of the Milk International Children’s Festival of the Arts, at one time one of the largest and most important festivals of its kind in North America. I am currently the Executive Director of IPAY (International Performing Arts for Youth) which is a growing arts service organisation based
in Philadelphia. We organise the largest annual showcasing event for professional performing arts for young people. It takes place in January of each year in a different city in North America. And finally I am also the Artistic Director of Presenting for PAPAYA (Pennsylvania Performing Arts for Young Audiences), a new organisation dedicated to producing and presenting international performing arts for young audiences, also based in Philadelphia. A large part of my work involves attending international festivals and seeing a wide selection of work from around the world. As such, I have the luxury of a helicopter view of what is happening in our sector internationally: not expertise in any one area but very much a broad perspective of what is going on in various countries and regions around the world.

I’m also a dad with two teenage kids at home, living in Toronto, Canada, and this too influences my perspective and opinion when curating work for young audiences.

When Gerhard asked me to share my opinion on Flemish performing arts for young audiences, I had to think about what the Flemish scene looks like from my North American perspective. While addressing this question incorporates my personal background as I’ve just described it to you, I believe it also involves a more general context that would be typical of colleagues from the USA and Canada.

To give you this context, I will use a very specific analogy, one that I think you’ll be able to appreciate: it involves beer.

Belgium is a country that cherishes its beer. It is known internationally for its beer. Wikipedia lists over 1,100 distinct kinds of beer coming from Belgium. Gerhard helped illustrate this by including a visit to a local pub tomorrow night that features over 400 types of beer. There are lights, darks, mediums, rouses, blondes, triples, doubles, Trappists and wheats. There is a distinct beer to be served with seafood, meats and cheeses. Beer to enjoy with dessert, on a warm spring day, or a cold winter night. Truly this is an art form that Belgians and the Flemish take very seriously.

And yet if you asked most North Americans to name their favourite Belgian beer, do you know what they would answer?

I would guess that 7 out of 10 people would most likely answer ‘Stella Artois’. In fact they would probably just say ‘Stella’, although there is a good chance that they might even just answer ‘Heineken’. (Yes, I know this is a Dutch beer and is very different from Flemish beer, but many North Americans would not differentiate between the two.)

In itself, this is nothing to be embarrassed about. Stella is a fine beer, enjoyed by millions around the world. It has won many awards, so it must be good. Your reputation for good beer is intact.

However, I would also guess that many of you here who truly enjoy your beer are rolling your eyes right now. If you had a guest in your house for dinner, you would most likely not be serving them Stella but rather would choose a specific bottle to suit what you were serving for dinner, or at least you would choose a suitable, locally brewed beer worthy of sharing with good friends. Your choice would not be the commercially produced, populist beer.

This is something that’s slowly changing in North America. There is a revival underway in the art of beer making, and tastes are changing. There is an increase in what we would call ‘craft beers’ or ‘microbreweries’ that are making Belgian-inspired beer, and people are becoming more familiar with Duvel, Leffe, Palm, La Chouffe, Chimay and many others. The more people experience, the more they become aware of a very diverse scene. The more they become aware of this scene, the more challenging it becomes to describe exactly what typifies the field as a whole. At the very least, you can say that Belgians are serious and passionate about their beer, that there is a huge diversity in the beers brewed, and that very discerning skills and tastes are required to make ‘good beer’.

My point is that the North American perspective on Flemish performing arts for young audiences may be very similar to its perspective on beer. I can’t tell you who I think the ‘Stella’ of the theatre/dance community is – I look forward to you telling me your opinion on this as we sample some of the 400 beers tomorrow night.

What I can tell you is that – in my opinion – the strength of the sector here is its passion, diversity, and the discerning skills and tastes needed to make ‘good art’. Taken as a whole, its strength lies in the sum of its parts.
honesty, authenticity, and a genuine quality about the people and the productions they make, and it is what I relate to, what resonates with me and what I appreciate most about what I see here.

North America is a continent that fences in the areas in which our children play, and creates ‘safe’ places in which there is protection from getting hurt but also very little opportunity for freedom of expression, creativity or exploration. Perhaps our work is very similar to this: safe and well made, but without a sense of exploration. When you grow up or live in this environment, it is with a sense of liberation and exhilaration that you experience work – art – that is so provocative, free and exploratory. This is the lens through which I experience much of the work in Flanders.

Returning to beer, I see many parallels here... The more I experience in Flemish theatre and dance, the more I come to like and appreciate the work, and the greater the diversity that I see. Much like beer, this work isn’t created for mass marketing. Words like quality and craftsmanship come to mind but – more importantly – so do distinction, uniqueness, passion and vision as well as a desire to tell a story. I know that I want to come back to continue to sample from the companies I have experienced before and I am equally excited to find new tastes and new experiences from artists and companies just entering the scene.

To share a personal story with you, at our recent IPAY Showcase in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, I had the pleasure of inviting Gerhard as well as Joke Lauryens from Kabinet K. to be guest participants in open conversations that we are holding within our community. For me, one of the highlights of these conversations was listening to Joke share her story of creating her production *Unfold*. I haven’t seen the production, but from how it was introduced, it comes from the idea of those moments in your life when you travel from place to place, lose yourself in thought, and yet still manage to arrive at your destination. It’s a simple idea: somehow we navigate life in the moments that unfold before us, on autopilot, yet deep thought is taking place at another level. I’m not doing justice to the production or Joke’s description of it. But it was remarkable how the moment that Joke
shared the story was so passionate and so personal for me, yet so easily shared with a community of people that Joke did not know. To be able to speak so passionately about such a personal thought or idea is so different from listening to many of our own artists who struggle to articulate a vision for their work or – even worse – perhaps justify how important it is to make another story about anti-bullying or trying to fit in. It strikes me that this exploration of real moments in our life is what is so important – so vital really – to the work that is being explored here.

The more I speak with artists from Flanders, the more I think that maybe this is what typifies so much of the region’s work: this passion, personal connection and desire to connect these feelings and emotions with the audience. I’m still exploring this idea, but it’s definitely something that I connect to within the body of work being created here.

This is my experience and my opinion. To very briefly go back to the question of what a North American perspective might be, I would have to be honest and say that most of my colleagues are still at the Stella stage of their discovery of Flemish work. Because the emphasis in Flanders has not been on exporting work, most presenters do not have the luxury of seeing the breadth of work being created here.

I’m not saying this is a bad thing. Part of the charm of Flemish work is that it is not first and foremost created with an international touring marketplace in mind. But it also means that Flemish work might well be the best kept secret in international performing arts for young audiences.

This too seems to be changing. For people who like titles such as the best theatre in the world, I believe the spotlight has shifted from Denmark and Holland, countries that have both been heralded as home to some of the best performing arts for young audiences in the world and still are home to outstanding companies, artists and productions. But as funding opportunities affect the landscape, new spotlights are starting to appear, and Flanders appears to be a region that people are starting to notice.

I think and I hope that this is a good thing. And in the same way that the Flemish or Belgians are humbly proud of their beer and continue to make great beer the way they believe it should be made, I hope that artists here will continue to make the work that they believe in, work that is caring, that pushes the boundaries, and that comes from the heart. There is nothing wrong with being the Stella Artois of the theatre world, but I hope that you will continue to be the La Chouffes, Chimays and Duvels of the world.

Thank you very much for allowing me to share with you today and hope that this doesn’t come across as too safe or too patronizing an overview of the work that you are creating here and that you have dedicated yourselves to.
This text is the synthesis of five focus group discussions on as many themes. Together they map out the present landscape of the performing arts for young audiences in 2013. In 2009, VTi published Pop-up! The place of children and youth in a dynamic art landscape. This publication offered a substantial analysis containing among others an overview of the artistic players and tendencies by Peter Anthonissen, an extensive analysis of the production data from the performing arts database by Joris Janssens, and a diverse set of individual articles on themes such as the life world of youth, hybridisation, the place of dance, the so-called free sector, internationalisation, and art and cultural education. The bundle concluded with a look to the future and mapped out eleven sector and policy priorities for the coming years.

Now, four years later, we again wish to take stock. Have the evolutions noted then with respect to hybridisation of the genres, co-production, internationalisation, and osmosis at the borders between the children’s and the evening circuit continued? How have the arts for children and youth been affected by the economic and broader crises that have been troubling our society since 2008? Are the social changes of the last decade affecting this segment in a specific way, or are the dynamics the same as for the performing arts in general? What are the most important challenges for the production and distribution of the performing arts in the coming years?
Between June and November 2013, VTi – spurred on by a steering group of key players in the sector – organised five focus group discussions on the following themes: the position of the artist in the sector; creation and production; distribution and presentation; the place of children’s arts in society at large; and internationalisation. A diverse group of people working in the performing arts for children and youth and associated sectors participated in each of these discussions. This text then is a summary of these discussions, with accents on several important themes, but also fed from time to time by additional analyses made on VTi’s performing arts database.

**DIVERSE ARTISTIC WORK FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES IN A SOCIETY IN FLUX**

The children’s arts are very audience-oriented. Especially performances given at schools are responsible for broad groups of children and youth becoming part of the theatre audience, for a majority for the very first time. Thus it is a great responsibility of the artists to suitably challenge children of diverse ages with performances tailored to their development. ‘You learn to eat Brussels sprouts, you learn to taste culture’, wrote Gerda Dendooven in *Pop-up!*. This principle actually applies not only to children, but also to adults with limited cultural baggage, except that in the case of children’s art, it is very clear to producers and programmers that they are the first guides in the audience’s journey of artistic discovery.

While in art in general, (only) the maker and his or her vision are assumed to be the crucial guiding principles, in artistic productions for children and youth, the audience is more prominent as an element to which the artist must relate. This fact may be behind the unfortunate belief that still exists that children’s arts would be less ‘artistic’ than their counterparts in the evening circuit, while one could say that the focus on the audience is predominantly a question of accessibility than of artistic quality.

According to VTi’s performing arts database, production for children and youth since 1993 makes up between 18 and 23% of the yearly total production of the Flemish performing arts landscape. Hence during this period, the total number of performances for children has grown steadily (with some fluctuations) along with the totality of performing arts productions. We are talking here about a very diverse – and increasingly more diverse – range of artistic work. This diversity is due to various factors. In these paragraphs we would like to reflect briefly on the way in which changes in the art environment may contribute to this and translate into changes in the artistic work itself. Given the wide-ranging inflow of young and new audiences, ‘the world’ enters this segment of the performing arts in a very direct way, and social developments can be felt here more quickly and more strongly. In this text, we are specifically talking about the growing cultural diversity among the people of Flanders and the explicit presence of new media in our daily lives.

**DIVERSE CULTURAL DIVERSITY**

Children’s and youth audiences in Flanders are much more diverse than the regular audiences in the evening circuit. Especially performances given for schools result in a broad sampling of youth coming into contact with theatre, dance and other art forms. According to various artists and producers around our table, this unavoidably has an impact on the work that is created. The fairy tales or stories in the repertoire are no longer considered self-evidently shared by all, some images, themes or forms can be sensitive topics for a part of the audience and not every child in the theatre speaks Dutch to the same degree. Thus the diversity in cultural backgrounds among children and youth is a cause for reflection on what to create or present and how. The fact that an organisation such as HETPALEIS is focusing in recent years more on visual and dance productions (thus non-linguistic works) is due among others to an increasingly diverse audience.

The question of how to ‘respond to a diverse audience’, however, does not have clear-cut and easy answers. Diversity after all means...
that different individuals with different backgrounds will be in the same auditorium at the same time. Or that the same production is presented today in multicultural Antwerp and tomorrow in less culturally diverse Schoten. How then to deal with this? And is it even possible or desirable to create productions that present equally many or equally few obstacles for each member of the audience? This remains a question that should find its answers through practice, with the challenge being not to seek refuge in caution, simplification or looking for ‘the common denominator’.

This is also an extra challenge with respect to public relations and audience development. Reaching target groups that do not ‘spontaneously’ find their way to the theatre demands special attention from an entire team as well as possible alliances with mediating organisations (neighbourhood community centres, youth centres ...) and mobilising other communication channels, sometimes using different languages. Developing a truly intercultural practice is unavoidably a long-term project that requires much care, time and thus resources – not obvious when organisations need to continue to operate like well-oiled machines on limited resources. During the 2013 edition of Kunstenfestivaldesarts in Brussels, Inne Goris shared her experience with a long-standing project in Vier Winden, a school in Molenbeek where she had previously worked as BRONKS educational assistant. It illustrates the efforts involved in true commitment. ‘As a maker you are searching for great sensitivity. You think that that will be easier to find with children. Not so. Some of them are now thirteen-years-old, hence adolescents. The peer pressure is immense. “We’re not going to do something stupid.” That sort of thing. Making theatre requires vulnerability. You cannot play with a suit of armour on. And that’s what they are: armoured. [...] Despite my years of experience, every day I felt like a beginner. [...] To lure them out of their comfort zone, I also have to leave my own. I started as I always do: by asking questions. “The woman with the weird questions”, as they called me. [...] Taking them along to shows and explaining why you find something beautiful. Asking them not simply to reject an idea but also to say why they reject it. Yet, after several months of working, I needed to try a different approach. It proved much more difficult than I expected to pierce through the group dynamic and mutual deadlocks. Come December, I began to outline an individual trajectory for each child.’

While the diversity of the young audience has become self-evident (especially in the context of school performances), cultural diversity among makers is still extremely limited. This applies to the performing arts in general, but a fortiori to the makers in the children’s and youth circuit. There is no lack of international artists, but many artists from abroad who are a part of our performing arts scene typically share similar codes or traditions and encounter one another in a shared international circuit. What is lacking on the stages are foreign artists trained in a non-Western theatre or dance tradition and young artists from here whose parents or grandparents immigrated to Belgium.

NEW MEDIA, NEW POSSIBILITIES?

Social media, tablets, online learning platforms, digital TV, games ... The digital media have become an integral part of our lives and those of our children. At school as well as in leisure time, a range of computers, smartphones and consoles are a part of the life world of young persons. Theatre makers sense this. Formulated negatively, it appears that children and young people have shorter concentration spans and need more and more stimuli to remain focused. On the other hand, familiarity with the new media means that young people have less need for a linear storyline and find it easier to be taken up by associative texts and images. Therefore, new media represent extra tools for theatre makers, and the receptivity of children and youth result in a broader range of possibilities for theatre productions that – for instance – cross over to other artistic genres and idioms.

Yet the new media are not yet very widely used in the performing arts. In completion of her theatre and film studies programme, Lotte De Mont conducted exploratory research into multimedia youth theatre productions based on several case studies in the 2012-2013 season. Here she cautiously established, among others, that theatre for
adults experiments more often with multimedia as part of performing arts. She suggested several questions in this regard: whether theatre for children perhaps is less bold with respect to experimentation, or whether the companies have insufficient financial resources to fully explore new technologies.

While new media appears to have found a place on stage here and there, the essence of theatre – following a production for a fixed duration, together with many other people, in concentration, without extra impulses from outside – clashes with the characteristics of new media: fast-paced, associative, tailored to the desires and rhythm of the individual user. Which is why theatre can precisely be celebrated as that exceptional space in which an experience is possible that differs from that which children are exposed to in their daily entertainment environment. An afternoon or evening of theatre is then precisely an experience of the luxury of collective attention, removed briefly from a world saturated with stimuli.

**HYBRIDISATION OF THE PRODUCTION FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES**

Both increasing audience diversity and the emergence of new media are leaving their mark in artistic developments on the stage, i.e. in the diversification of the forms and genres of performing arts productions for young audiences. Chart 1 depicts this hybridisation of productions. Of course this phenomenon of productions becoming more hybrid is being driven by many more factors than those just mentioned. We mention here a few of these other factors that surfaced around our discussion tables. In the first place, artistic interests result in partnerships beyond the borders of the performing arts sectors and thus in productions that combine different genres. But financial motivations can also guide such partnerships. Language-independent productions can also open the door to international tours. What chart 1 also shows, in addition to hybridisation, is that a strong presence of text theatre still remains. Diversification indeed does not imply that one thing necessarily replaces another. Making use of non-linguistic genres in order to attract a wider audience exists next to the equally strong option of consciously using text theatre to confront children and youth with the pleasure of exceptional and clever texts in language styles that they encounter nowhere else in their daily lives.

**Chart 1. Genres in the performing arts for young audiences, 1993-2013**

Chart 1 depicts the evolution in the genre labels that productions for young audiences were assigned between 1993 and 2013. Where in 1993 the productions consisted almost exclusively of ‘pure’ (text) theatre and puppet theatre, in 2013 these together constituted 70% of what was offered. Since the 1998-1999 season, first music theatre and then dance are gaining in importance, but a strong share is also going to performances that combine diverse genres in the same production - what we call ‘hybrid productions’. These can be made up of different performing arts genres, but can also be a combination of the performing arts with music, video or other artistic disciplines.
DIVERSE PLAYERS IN A COMPLEX MARKET UNDER PRESSURE

In the last decades, the artistic production for young audiences has increased significantly. In addition to the artistic work of the subsidised performing arts producers, the so-called ‘free sector’ is also explicitly present in the market. This segment is made up of the major commercial players such as Studio 100 and Music Hall, as well as the smaller non-subsidised producers who often directly target the schools (thus without intermediaries such as cultural centres) with work that is happy to focus on specific themes that fit the curriculum and can be presented in school auditoriums or classrooms. In addition to the expanded range of performing arts productions, also art education projects are on the rise.

The circuits of venues presenting productions for children and youth are specific. Where the arts centres scarcely play a role here (see also below), the network of cultural centres, together with the schools, is the main playing field. Performances for schools take place via the mediation of programmers from the cultural centres or via direct contact between producers and schools. The current social context is putting pressure on this complex playing field with its diverse players in many ways.

THE PRESSURE’S ON

Cultural centres in a changing economic and political context

Flanders has a rich network of local cultural centres, offering a broad selection of cultural activities and playing an important role in the distribution of children’s productions. These cultural centres are the responsibility of municipal governments. The continuing financial crisis of recent years has placed substantial pressure on the budgets of these local governments and resources for culture are often not seen as a priority within the municipal budget. This tendency was reinforced by the recent introduction in Flanders of a number of new Decrees, giving the municipalities more freedom to shape their own policy, lighten their reporting requirements and no longer demanding them to draw up a separate cultural policy plan, for which specific resources are explicitly allocated. Rather, cultural policy becomes a part of the overall planning of the municipalities. This results in the Flemish government having much less oversight over the quality of local cultural policy and the internal allocation of resources, and in culture having to defend itself even more assertively against other policy domains in these integrated multi-year plans.

Pressure on the budget of cultural centres is felt in various ways in programming for children and youth. There are great differences between the many centres, but the discussion groups indicated that a number of cultural centres were subject to disproportionately large cuts in their programme for younger audiences in order to safeguard somewhat the evening programme. Thus not only are they making it difficult for the producers in the circuit, but they are also mortgaging opportunities to develop the audiences of the future. Good habits, after all, are best learned young.

A practice that continues to be applied more and more in cultural centres and which creates more uncertainty for the artists and producers, is that school performances are booked as ‘options’. This means that in case insufficient classes are found to view the production, the presentation is simply cancelled without financial consequences for the presenting venues. Where the system of options was previously seen as an extra opportunity to present successful productions a second time in the case of great interest on the part of the audience, it increasingly is becoming the norm. This shifts all of the financial risk from the venue to the producer. Moreover, the programmer or organiser may no longer feel urged or responsible for finding an audience or convincing schools to take a leap in the dark for a production of an artist or company in which he or she believes. One can say that the less committed programmer can, through this system of options, even allow his or her programme to be dictated by the explicit wishes of schools, rather than by his or her own vision.

As stated, not only has the number of performing arts productions increased in the past decade, so have other art productions and art
and cultural education initiatives – initiatives in which children, under supervision, actively learn about aspects of art and culture. While art visits and art education complement each other well, dwindling resources sometimes can lead to competition between the two. Here art education threatens to replace art visits and thus the unmediated confrontation with works of art and the vision of the artist. In the focus group discussions it surfaced that cultural centres more often and more explicitly are being requested by schools to provide art and cultural education productions. In other words, this expansion of the range of possibly interesting art-related projects, in combination with decreasing resources, is placing pressure on performing arts productions.

**Limits to extra school costs for parents**

While in principle primary and secondary education is free in Flanders (meaning: without tuition), diverse costs at school still represent a substantial chunk of the household budget: notebooks, gym clothing, transportation to the swimming pool, school trips, as well as theatre and museum visits. To place limits on this, the Flemish government introduced the ‘maximum invoice scheme’ for kindergarten and primary education. This specifies a maximum amount above which schools are not allowed to pass on the extra costs to students and their parents. It is then up to the schools to find other sources of financing if they wish to increase the costs of their educational task. For primary education, this amount was set at 70 euro per student per school year for school year 2013-2014. According to the programmers and producers we talked to, the amount that schools spend on theatre visits has decreased considerably since the introduction of this limit.

**Low fees**

As a supplement to these changing factors in the economic environment, we should draw attention to the fact that children’s and youth productions in any case must count on lower artistic fees. Where fees in the evening circuit are more strongly related to the actual costs that producers incur for the performance, fees in children’s arts correspond more directly to the expected income of the present- ing organisations. A quote from the open letter that the children’s art organisations sent to Minister Schauwliege in May 2012: ‘A quick calculation. A presentation to pre-schoolers where 150 pre-schoolers pay 5 euro to view a production yields 750 euro. A production for 300 adults who pay 15 euro yields 4,500 euro. This is a difference of 3,750 euro per production, while the costs are the same. […] An actor, composer or designer for youth theatre costs as much as for the adult circuit. […] Programmers offer low fees because their income is limited. However, the same demands are placed on the subsidised companies producing art for young audiences that are placed on others: compliance with the collective bargaining agreement; working with professional actors; working with professional designers; technical support.’

Certainly when, in times of crisis, some local governments start to ask their cultural centres to break even on each of the presentations on their programme, the investments or costs that the producers must incur are not in proportion to those of the other parties concerned.

**Climate change**

In addition to this concrete financial situation, there is also a broader climate in which in general it is more difficult for the arts to obtain full recognition. An overall political discourse of public management celebrating quantifiability, comparability and transparency, as well as stronger regulation and stricter scheduling requirements in for example schools and cultural centres, but also for producers of art, mean that it is increasingly difficult to make time for good personal contacts, close consultation and seeking mutual understanding between all of these partners. Also, the pressure to view participation in art increasingly as one of many attractive products or events within a broad range of leisure activities, makes it almost impossible for workers in the art sector to communicate and safeguard the specificity of the artistic values and experience. In recent years, several collective campaigns have been running in the art sectors to again make visible the value of art in society. These include ‘Mijn Dagelijkse..."
Portie Kunst [My Daily Portion of Art], initiated by the Antwerp network of arts organisations AKO and a research project by a consortium of the support centres of the different artistic and cultural sectors in Flanders (among which VTi for the performing arts).

For today’s producers of art for children, the challenge lies in finding a balance between being artistically innovative and staying sharp, and providing enough ‘hits’ to continue to generate future opportunities and ensure visibility. Also being actively sought are other, less expensive, ways to bring children in contact with art and thus ensure that as many children as possible are given the opportunity to acquaint themselves with quality theatre. In 2007, for example, HETPALEIS created the theatrical installation De grote reis [The great journey] with Judith Nab in a converted bus that rode directly to the schools, as a way to address the great absence of pre-schoolers in their audience. In the meantime, this production has already been presented more than 400 times. The pressure is increasing to present more in the schools themselves (in order to eliminate the costs of transport and auditorium rental). Laika also offers nice examples of productions made to be presented in classrooms such as Zetels Van Goud [Chairs of Gold] and Het gevecht van De Vocht [The battle of De Vocht]. The latter production concerns a teacher whose work is becoming harder with each year and who must also come to terms with the suicide of one of his students. Because of this, a special mix of recognisability and fiction suddenly hangs in the classroom. While artists certainly are up to the challenge of presenting in schools, of course it also remains important that children and young people are able to taste the atmosphere of a theatre house, so that possible barriers to a future autonomous visit is lowered as much as possible.

A LONG CHAIN OF PLAYERS BRING ART TO THE CHILDREN

The first encounters of a young audience with art proceed via the mediation or support of a long chain of people and organisations. Each of these has an important role to play and can contribute to youth appreciating theatre ... or, just the opposite, deciding very early on that theatre is absolutely not ‘their cup of tea’. We listed these during the focus groups: artists and producers, art education players, programmers, schools, teachers and teacher trainers, parents, the media and the various levels of government. At Flemish level, this includes those responsible for culture, but also those in charge of education and youth as well as the local governments. In this section, we will take a look at the role of art programmers and teachers.

A programme for programmers

While each of the players listed is an important link in the chain, the art programmer occupies a key position as bridge between the artists on the one hand and the schools or the parents and their children on the other hand. The network of cultural centres is made up of extremely diverse organisations, with some having a devoted programmer and others a colleague with little or no vision on the programming policy for children’s and youth theatre. The ‘ideal profile’ for the programmer surfaced in our discussions. This individual must be able to put together a programme based on a vision of both art and the young audience. In this, he or she does not search for productions of which success is certain, but rather for productions that the audience will learn to appreciate. In other words, this search is not based on known demand, but the programmer must dare to opt for strong productions. He or she must be able to inspire passion for art and be more of a missionary than a civil servant. Being present at the presentations and establishing a dialogue with the parents, teachers and children are a must. Being accessible makes it possible for programmers to hear the questions of visitors and when needed provide them with points of reference to facilitate their viewing and interpretations. The performing arts producers we spoke to felt strongly that where a cultural centre has a tradition of strong programmers, the audience trusts its selections and can be taken on a more adventurous journey.

For schools, this ideal programmer tailors the selection to their specific needs. This requires that he/she gets to know the schools and teachers and builds up a long-lasting relationship, rather than passively waiting for unsolicited interest on the part of the teachers.
and school directors. Art programmers have a guiding role to play, certainly for the many teachers who do not feel comfortable with the arts and do not know how to choose productions for their classes. This includes not only some contextualisation of the programme, but also offering insight in the specificity of art, thus crafting the expectations of the audience in order for them to be prepared to discover something new. Productions are frequently booked before they are created or complete, so the programmer cannot guarantee that the afternoon’s theatre will be a success. An inferior production is perhaps not always pleasant, but – with the right approach – it does not have to be a ‘failed’ artistic experience.

This of course becomes more difficult when programmers are unfamiliar with the arts and allow themselves to be guided in discussions with teachers by explicit, concrete wishes that are made concerning themes related to the lessons (bullying!), the number of actors on stage (no monologues!) and the wish to see famous actors in action. When this happens, they in fact abandon their role of bridge figure between the artistic story and the youngsters. Without a vision, the selection process also threatens to sacrifice the quality factor in favour of example of the production’s price.

The power of teachers

Just as there are great differences among art programmers, there are also considerable differences among schools and teachers concerning the way in which they allow art to be a part of school life. One teacher can make a difference in the life of a young person, but with an uninterested attitude or a faulty approach, they can also slam the door shut. According to our discussion partners, the most important characteristics of the teacher are openness and the ability to inspire an attitude of interest. Teachers typically are not art specialists and do not need to be – art programmers, art education professionals and producers are professional partners in guiding and framing the experiences of the pupils – but they are a ‘role model’ for how children and youth experience art as an audience.

Programmers point out that the demand for classical text theatre among teachers and schools remains high, which unavoidably has an impact on their choice and sends a message to producers. We previously provided insight into the hybridisation of productions for children and youth: on the one hand, music theatre and dance have earned a place alongside text and puppet theatre. On the other hand, more and more productions transcend the boundaries of these genres and make use of music, visual work or multimedia. It is not always easy for art programmers to convince schools to accept this more hybrid work. The demand for productions with an emphasis on text is possibly due to ‘traditional’ expectations of what ‘theatre’ should be. Also relevant is the fact that in secondary education curricula, theatre is still a part of Dutch language classes and is thus approached from the perspective of text and less so from the perspective of the live performing arts. The evolutions undergone by youth theatre in the last ten to twenty years are enormous, and while productions have changed significantly, the individual teachers are frequently still the same.

The relationship between creators and schools is ambiguous. On the one hand, the school circuit provides access to a very broad and diverse audience which creators in other performance circuits can only dream of. On the other hand, the theatre experience is always embedded in the school context, with the risk of drowning in an educational sauce. The theatre visit in schools often has an obligatory character and is typically framed as part of a curriculum from which something concrete must be learned. Ideally this should be reoriented in the direction of an approach where ‘today we have no class, but we will be going to the theatre together instead’. Young people must be able to shape and process this experience themselves, without it being hijacked in function of learning that is foreign to art itself. And precisely this aspect is difficult in school performances.
The Uniqueness of the Production for Young Audiences as Part of the Broader Field of the Performing Arts

Performing arts productions for children and youth are an integral part of the performing arts sector. Consequently, the producers and production methods exhibit more similarities than differences with the rest of the field. Nevertheless, in this section we would like to examine a number of characteristics unique to the youth segment of the performing arts.

The ‘Production House’ Model

Children’s and youth productions, like the rest of the performing arts in Flanders, are produced by companies (operating on a structural or project basis) and individual creators; and by theatre houses that in addition to production, also exercise a presentation function. It is remarkable however that the relative position between these players in the children’s arts segment appear to be different than those in the broader field. In the performing arts for children and youth, the ‘production houses’ clearly play a central role in the field, while the number of small independent players (project companies or individual makers) is proportionately much less extensive.

First a description. We use the term ‘production house’ for organisations that produce theatre and/or dance, but that do not act as a company of one artist or collective. Instead, they operate as a structure in which various individual makers are engaged and supported to develop projects for a certain time. These houses are HETPALEIS, BRONKS, KOPERGIETERY, Villanella and fabULEUS, but also a company such as FroeFroe takes young makers under its wings in order to guide them in the field of (children’s) art.

The fact that these structures play such a prominent role in this segment of the sector can be understood as follows. Children’s arts are programmed by separate art programmers and partially in other circuits than the evening presentations. Moreover, making art for children and youth of various age groups requires unique expertise. These networks and this expertise are centralised in the established structures in the sector, among which the above-mentioned production houses. Relatively few young makers spontaneously dedicate themselves to creations for children or youth. This on the one hand has to do with the fact that in their early development, graduates generally have an initial focus on the development of their own artistic language and story and there would be a fear among young artists that they might not be able to develop and use their own language if they focus too strongly on a young target group. On the other hand, the limited unsolicited intake into the youth segment also has to do with the absence of children’s arts in the higher educational programmes for artists. Yet it should be possible to have each theatre or dance maker in training create their own project for children throughout his or her education, possibly guided by an experienced house or maker. The art schools also usually provide their students with lists of productions they should see and discuss during the school year, but these seldom or never include productions played for children and youth. Consequently, the initiative to ‘attract’ artists and encourage them in the direction of the children’s arts lies primarily with the above-mentioned production houses. Moreover, it is also up to them to introduce the makers to the ins and outs of creating art for children.

The central position held by the production house model in the children’s arts has several noteworthy advantages. The artists working on projects in these houses are supported by a strong structure that not only facilitates all aspects of creation and production, but also handles the business side of the projects. In other words, artists are not required to engage a lot of energy and time to put together an entourage as autonomous minor player. Hence, this way of working appears to play a significant role in limiting the fragmentation of resources in the children’s and youth production segment. In our investigation of the entire performing arts field in the previous field analysis, we noted that more and more co-producers appear to be needed to complete productions. Chart 2 shows that this trend is also
present in the children’s arts, but to a lesser degree than in the totality of the performing arts. Yet further research is needed to determine whether this hypothesis of the ‘production house model’ as buffer against the fragmentation of resources is correct. Should this prove to be the case, then this way of working could become a model to re-discuss for the broader field within the performing arts. After all, the independent artists are the ones bearing the negative consequences of fragmentation and who are finding it increasingly difficult to put all the fragments back together to realise projects. The support of workspaces, arts centres and management bureaus is broad and diverse, but is also increasingly distributed across separate, specialised organisations, requiring artists themselves to play a major coordinating role.

Is this production house model then the ideal? Not necessarily. Each of these houses of course has its own artistic profile that fits certain artists and not others. Even if the same maker can work at a production house for a short period of time, it is not certain that each project or initiative that he or she proposes will be supported by the organisation. The negotiation concerning one’s artistic profile and ownership of productions reveals itself among others in issues concerning the naming of productions. Where for example the productions that Randi De Vlieghe made with fABULEUS during the last decade were presented as fABULEUS productions with Randi De Vlieghe as choreographer, recently there has been more discussion concerning the flag under which productions sail. 3 op 3 /3 on 3/ was presented to the world as a production by fABULEUS and Busy Rocks. Busy Rocks is the structure in which choreographers Fabián Barba, Marisa Cabal and Tuur Marinus work. Artistic profiling and selection by production houses of course are not a problem in themselves, as long as enough organisations exist that can fully facilitate individual development and proposals of the young makers. The children’s arts sector is perhaps also better served by extra workspaces (or space in the existing structures) where work can be done in a more research-based way without this work needing to immediately result in productions, something that is much less evident in production houses.

The question remains concerning the relationships between what is made by those with structural subsidies (production houses and companies) and the space taken by companies that do not enjoy permanent support or makers who operate as individuals. We previously discussed the specific children’s art market in which producers are increasingly feeling financial pressure from their partners/venues and where the fees are low. Moreover, the possibilities for co-production are rather limited (see below). What if the no-longer-so-young makers wish to work independently? Organisations such as Kabinet K. and Compagnie Frieda are gradually becoming established names in the landscape, but their efforts are rooted in very thin soil without the back-up of structures such as KOPERGIETERY and FroeFroe. Consequently, this part of the performing arts sector requires special attention on the part of policy and the rest of the field.

Chart 2. Number of (co-)producers per production for young audiences, 1993-2013
Chart 2 shows that in 1993, almost all productions for young audiences were realised by just one producer. This was still 70% in 2000, and in the 2012-2013 season will represent only 50% of productions. In this last season, 30% was produced by two organisations, 10% by three organisations and the remaining 10% by four or more (co-)producers. The intensification of the practice of co-production for the total performing arts field that we noted in *Ins and outs. A field analysis of the performing arts in Flanders* is also continuing in the children’s arts. Yet the phenomenon remains more limited. In the totality of the stage productions, equally half of the productions were made by just one producer. But the other half that was realised via co-productions is distributed differently. 25% of the total performing arts productions in the VTi database were realised by two players, 20% by three to five organisations, and 5% by more than five organisations.

**OSMOSIS WITHIN A SEPARATE CIRCUIT**

**Osmosis confirmed**

The 2009 publication *Pop-up!* introduced the concept ‘osmosis’ to indicate that the borders between the circuit for young audiences and the adult circuit had become increasingly porous in both the practice of artists and that of producing organisations. Analyses of VTi’s performing arts database showed that the number of artists active in productions for children and youth has grown strongly since 1993. Remarkable was the fact that this growth was represented not so much by artists who worked (almost) exclusively for young audiences, but by artists who combine this work with performing arts elsewhere in the sector. In the period 1993-1997, one third of the artists who created for and presented to children and youth were artists working exclusively for young audiences, while this was the case for only one fourth in the period 2001-2005. On the one hand, this evolution was explained by the generally increased mobility of those working in the performing arts. Fewer and fewer artists are building their careers in a single house. Instead, they are working with various structures on a series of projects. This phenomenon sets the preconditions for a pattern where artists can develop activities for children and youth as well as adults. On the other hand, this shift is the result of an active policy on the part of the children’s art houses to open their doors and attract makers from the regular circuit to make productions for youth.

Not only artists, but also producing organisations operate across the borders of children’s arts and the regular circuit, even though this trend grew less quickly, as an analysis of the 2009 figures shows. Osmosis by organisations appeared primarily since the period 2001-2005. We did not execute this rather complex data analysis for the subsidy periods after 2005. Based on their experience in the sector, however, our discussion partners in the focus groups agreed that in the meantime the osmosis of artists and organisations is an established fact and certainly has not declined.

What does stand out is the fact that exchange between the youth and adult segments remains primarily a one-way street. Makers and players from the evening circuit more often alternate this this with working for children and youth, then the other way round: artists and organisations specialising in productions for young audiences seldom choose to also make productions for the evening audience.

While the dividing lines that we draw between the children’s arts and the other performing arts are porous, and many (especially) artists succeed in building a career based on work in both circuits, a number of barriers remain. As noted above, productions made for children or youth in Flanders principally take place in the cultural centres and schools, and the art programmers for youth work are typically not the same as those for the evening programme. Because of this, actors or creators who temporarily make the move to a different network of professionals risk losing visibility and contacts in the evening circuit where they were initially active. The fact that a number of professionals still consider works for children as less artistic or less relevant to one’s career makes it potentially risky for an artist to dedicate a period to productions for children or youth. Possible barriers consist in a difference in professional networks and...
a difference in status, as well as the need for expertise in connection to the capabilities of various age groups and how to appropriately challenge them without overestimating – but certainly also without underestimating – them. Because higher education for theatre and dance pays little or no attention to working for children and youth, (young) creators typically have to pick up this expertise or feeling later on, which often obliges them to ally with other artists or houses when producing for children or youth.

**Co-productions by art and cultural centres**

A striking characteristic of the production zone of the performing arts for children and youth is that the arts centres scarcely play a significant role, while the cultural centres not only act as venue, but occasionally even as co-producer. In the evening circuit, the arts centres are the main co-producers.

We sampled the performing arts database of the last ten seasons, from 2003 until now, to determine which arts centres were involved as main producer or co-producer in productions labelled for children or youth. Standing out in the first place are Villanella in Antwerp, De Werf in Bruges and Rataplan in Antwerp. They appear (almost) yearly as (co-)producer of children’s arts. Villanella, as the only arts centre with an explicit focus on children and youth, supports many productions. As an arts centre De Werf produces and presents quite a bit performances for children and youth each year, in addition to its work for and in the evening circuit. The same applies to Rataplan in Antwerp. In the last ten years, arts centre STUK also appears eight times as co-producer of a children’s or youth production. This systematic engagement however, remains rather limited in comparison to its total production: in each of the last three seasons, one production out of an average of thirty productions per year. In the ten year period searched, Victoria and Nieuwpooortheater – later merged into arts centre CAMPO, Ghent – emerge as occasional producers for young audiences but also arts centres Monty and NONA and the international art house deSingel also appeared regularly as co-producer of children’s performances.

Quite in contrast to this relatively limited contribution by the arts centres to the children’s and youth segment of the performing arts, is the noticeable role played by a number of cultural and community centres. Standing out in the first place during the last ten years were the cultural centres of Hasselt, Mechelen, Etterbeek, Sint-Niklaas, Genk, Wilrijk and the Kiel district of Antwerp. During this period, they appeared in more than three seasons as (co-)producer for the children’s arts. And a string of other cultural centres in smaller cities are also active as (occasional) co-producers for children and youth performances. CC Hasselt and C-mine in Genk represent the two outliers in the group with up to twelve and sixteen supported performing arts productions respectively in the past years.

Another organisation worth mentioning which is strictly speaking not a cultural or community centre, but a provincial institution is Dommelhof in Neerpelt. It does not only regularly co-produce and offer residencies to artists working for young audiences, the TAKT festivals equally draw attention to the work of upcoming artists in a nice mix between work for the young and for adults.

To summarise: the cultural centres in general are not major (co-)producers in the performing arts, but when they assume the role of (co-)producer, this occurs principally or exclusively within the children’s arts segment.

Several cultural centres also play a prominent role by organising festivals or special events in the children’s arts field. The Krokusfestival is organised by CC Hasselt and Stormopkomst is hosted by De Warande in Turnhout. These festivals, which can count on subsidies via the Arts Decree, in turn play a role as co-producer. Another example is 30CC, the Leuven cultural centre, which organises the Rode Hond children’s art festival in partnership with various art, cultural and youth organisations in the city.
THE CURSE OF AGE CATEGORIES

The fact that we speak of ‘performing arts for young audiences’ has everything to do with the fact that these productions are intended and labelled for a specific age category (which is not the case in what we call ‘the evening circuit’ or productions for adults). The basic principle of age categories is that they indicate a boundary. Children younger than the prescribed age are potentially too young to be able to experience the production. Everyone above this age limit is welcome. What happens, however, is that people with children in the indicated age category are hesitant to bring older children. And extremely rare are the adults who attend without children. This age determination is actually a curse for both the creators and the audience.

 Straitjacket

Since communications about productions with art programmers and the potential audience take place before the production is complete, artists must indicate their intended age category already before or during the process of creation. This is not always easy and is also undesirable when the creative process points in a different direction. While creating productions for children and youth may require certain knowledge and expertise concerning the various target groups, there are no ready-made formulas to arrive at productions for 8+, 10+ or 16+. The answer to the question concerning the age limit also lies for a part quite simply in the completed production and the confrontation with the audience.

In this, age in any case is not an absolute. As Barbara Wyckmans, director of HETPALEIS, so enticingly stated in her article in Pop-up!: ‘Do you know any identical peers? I speak from experience! I myself am a twin. Yet I did not learn to bicycle or swim on the same day, did not understand my twin brother’s jokes, and as a child, lived in constant fear that Santa Claus would surprise me with toys similar to those of my brother Ferre. Is every nine-year-old ready for the piece Wortel van Glas? Still more: Is every adult captivated by the acclaimed production? After the umpteenth discussion with an enthusiastic teacher on over-emphasising the age of the target group, or with a culture-loving parent on under-estimating their son or daughter, I often look at the playbills of Toneelhuis (Antwerp’s City Theatre). I have yet to see the first designation in the direction of “intended for those 30 and over, unmarried, single with child” or “someone older than 50 whose father has just died and now must clear out the parental house.”

Artist Manon Avermaete was recently confronted with these strange experiences when, after years of creating street performances, she created a piece for the black box. On the street, a label is unnecessary: all – children, youth or adults – are free to stop or continue on their way. The same happened with the ‘front door production’ in which artist Freek Mariën had participated. Those who opened the door and took the time, were rewarded with a production, regardless of age.

Untapped audience

All those older than the indicated age limit are welcome, including older children and adults. Yet the idea is out there that these productions are only ‘for children of this age’ and that for anyone older than this, they would suddenly be ‘childish’ – despite many attempts at alternative labelling (‘from 7 to 77’, ‘all audiences’, ‘10 years of age and older’ …). These productions are not childish, but rather accessible. Complex, conceptual and very long productions are not made for young children, but many adults are also not interested in such productions and could find what they are looking for in the youth circuit: surprising, fanciful, poetic, visual and disarming productions. Consequently, the barrier that the age categories seemingly erect is a missed opportunity for the mature audience seeking accessible productions.

Moreover, this also has business consequences. Ticket prices vary: children or families pay less for a ticket than individual adults. If the audience for children’s and youth productions were more diverse in age, the ticket prices could also vary and income could increase.
In the future, the sector as a whole could work on an ‘osmosis of performing arts productions’. We earlier referred to the osmosis between the youth and the evening circuit on the part of artists and producing organisations. More of these players are finding their way to both circuits. However, there is much too little osmosis of productions, i.e. productions that play for school, family and evening presentations. Thus productions initially made for youth could also be presented in the evening to an adult audience, and accessible ‘evening productions’ could also be scheduled during the day for schools and families. The latter possibly involves some investment in revision (for example making a longer production shorter), but the size of the audience that might be reached in this way is large. This type of osmosis, however, does require the breaking down of the borders between the separate circuits, as well as an awareness by art programmers and production houses of what is happening in the ‘other’ circuit.

INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE

Much like the rest of the performing arts field in Flanders, the children’s arts sector has also been subject to internationalisation. Productions are made in partnership with foreign partners, presentations are distributed abroad, and working models from other countries can serve as sources of inspiration for in-house activities. In addition, foreign productions and organisations visit us to present and exchange work. We will list these tendencies in the following paragraphs.

Going abroad

Various organisations create productions together with partners from abroad. The motivations for such collaboration are diverse. In the first place they are of artistic nature. Partnerships are concluded with specific players and sometimes the most interesting artistic partner for a production is located in another country. However, it can also be interesting to search for foreign locations in which to test one’s vision and productions in a different context. Productions sometimes open up different dialogues or discussions in other countries. KOPERGIETERY, for example, experienced this with the production *The (im)possible friendship between Augustijn and Stef*. Where in Flanders this work evoked no discussion worthy of note, in other countries it raised questions concerning the way in which seven-year old Augustijn was presented on stage, sometimes in his underwear, playing with 35-year old Stef. Such differences in reception can be an invitation to examine one’s own work from a different perspective.

Business motivations also play a role in the choice to work with foreign partners. Co-producing after all is a way to pool resources in the making of productions. Various producers, however, indicated that it is difficult to develop such partnerships over the longer term. Commitments frequently depend on individuals, and when changes in personnel take place, the possibility for further cooperation often disappears.

A third motivation concerns specific models of creation and production available elsewhere and not available at home. By entering into alliances, special expertise can be acquired. Austria and Germany, for example, have their *Tanzhäuser*: houses for dance that create, produce and present for adults as well as children. The possibilities for housing children’s and other arts under one roof are visible there. For that matter, the Flemish performing arts for children and youth have also developed unique expertise that is highly appreciated abroad, i.e. the way in which work is created with children. The quality and professionalism with which children are involved as co-creators in an artistic process appear to be unique.

Organisations not only co-produce on an international level, productions also tour abroad. The data analysis presented in chart 3 shows that in the period 2001 to 2013, roughly one in three children’s and youth productions from Flanders were also presented in other countries. For the totality of Flemish stage productions this percentage is some 5 to 10% higher. The VTi database shows a peak of Flemish productions presented abroad in 2008 (to a total of 500 presentations) and a decline from then onwards with some 200 international...
performances in 2013. Even though the drop is considerable, it is not easy to draw strong conclusions based on these figures.

Without drawing definite conclusions, some explanations are possible. One of the factors in this decrease between 2008 and 2013 is the temporary freezing or blocking of subsidies for international activities of the Flemish Government. The companies appealed to Flemish subsidy schemes especially to cover the costs of travel, lodging and transport and for international projects. Organisations that receive less than 300,000 euro in structural subsidies per year of the Flemish Government can apply for one-off subsidy grants for travel, lodging and transport for activities abroad. However, these resources were temporarily frozen between May 2010 and May 2011 as a response to the financial and economic crisis but also in anticipation of a change to the regulations concerning international resources and projects. Consequently, the budget available in 2010 and 2011 was much less than before. Touring abroad, however, is expensive precisely due to the costs of travel, lodging and transport. Many host countries in fact expect the producer to bear these costs. Consequently, for many players, the loss of travel, lodging and transport subsidies meant a reduction in international activity.

The regions where the Flemish productions abroad are presented, are also indicative of the extent to which international touring is determined by limited resources. Most of the productions are presented in Western Europe. Southern and Eastern Europe are rarely considered, and the boundary to the north is more or less Denmark. One proviso here: it is also remarkable how difficult it appears to be to gain a foothold in Wallonia, the French speaking region of Belgium. It remains a difficult-to-access ‘foreign country’, while it costs no more for a Brussels company to play in Liege than it does to play in Ostend (unless one needs to translate the theatre text).

Chart 3 depicts two types of data. The bars indicate the total number of performing arts productions for children and youth categorised according to whether or not one or more productions were presented abroad. The blue parts of the bar indicate the number of international touring productions for each season; the green bars refer to the productions that only were presented in Belgium (not just Flanders). For 25 to 35% of the performing arts productions for young audiences, one or more performances were presented abroad, with outliers in 2000-2001 (38%) and in 2008-2009 (43%). Thus roughly one in three productions found their way abroad.

The red line in the above chart shows greater fluctuations. It indicates the total number of performances that all children’s art productions presented abroad. Striking is the peak of almost 400 productions in 2004-2005 and the peak of more than 500 performances in 2008-2009, after which the number decreases to 200 productions in 2012-2013.
CONCLUSION: LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

This conclusion will list several of the most important insights. They concern tendencies or characteristic features of the children’s arts field that are important to future developments in the performing arts for children and youth. In 2014, VTi works with the other information and support centres in the art fields to map out the landscape of the arts in Flanders. This map of the landscape will be submitted to the new minister for Culture, who can then base his or her vision statement on it at the beginning of the next legislature. The elements that we again highlight here will find their way into our larger map of the Flemish performing arts in 2014.

A prominent strength of this subfield is that it is extremely sensitive to changes in the environment. The audience of the children’s arts is broad and diverse, causing social evolutions such as the cultural diversification of the population and the effects of multimedia on our life world to be quickly noticed and adopted. It is a dynamic field in which the changes around us not only translate into organisational answers, but also into artistic evolutions.

The breadth and complexity of the playing field in which producers operate also requires them to be alert. Producers of subsidised performing arts are active alongside makers from the commercial circuit and are increasingly joined by art education players and producers active in the other art forms. All of this while the partners of the producers for presentation of their work are under strong pressure. For a number of years now, schools have been required to respect a maximum limit for school costs, and the cultural centres are also feeling the pressure of the economic crisis on the municipal budgets. The fact that beginning in 2014, cultural policy in each municipality will be a part of an overall plan and budget, and no longer have a separate cultural policy plan, means that we must be extra vigilant to ensure that coverage throughout Flanders via cultural centres will continue to exist for quality art productions. The network of cultural centres plays an extremely important role in the performing arts for

Visitors

‘Internationalisation’ means not only export and international collaborations, but also attracting good productions from abroad. Only a few venues and festivals in the Flemish field present international performances for young audiences. Festivals such as Krokusfestival and Stormopkomst maintain a broad view, and BRONKS also presents an international theatre festival with Export/Import. Several Dutch companies regularly appear in the annual programme of BRONKS and HETPALEIS. International programming not only gives Flemish audiences the chance to view exceptional productions from abroad but is also of interest for the professionals. Furthermore, it also serves the international community in the capital Brussels.

Developing an international programme is not self-evident. The choice to look further than one’s borders requires a major investment in time and money. Moreover, coordination with foreign players requires a scheduling exercise that is difficult precisely for festivals that take place only one or a few weeks per year. The production you are interested in might not be available during that one festival week in February or November. Building relationships with colleagues in other countries after all necessitates reciprocity and a two-way flow of people and productions.

Export/Import

‘Internationalisation’ means not only export and international collaborations, but also attracting good productions from abroad. Only a few venues and festivals in the Flemish field present international performances for young audiences. Festivals such as Krokusfestival and Stormopkomst maintain a broad view, and BRONKS also presents an international theatre festival with Export/Import. Several Dutch companies regularly appear in the annual programme of BRONKS and HETPALEIS. International programming not only gives Flemish audiences the chance to view exceptional productions from abroad but is also of interest for the professionals. Furthermore, it also serves the international community in the capital Brussels.

Developing an international programme is not self-evident. The choice to look further than one’s borders requires a major investment in time and money. Moreover, coordination with foreign players requires a scheduling exercise that is difficult precisely for festivals that take place only one or a few weeks per year. The production you are interested in might not be available during that one festival week in February or November. Building relationships with colleagues in other countries after all necessitates reciprocity and a two-way flow of people and productions.
little, however, is an osmosis of productions; too few productions play both during the day and in the evening for an audience of diverse age groups. The age limit with which productions are announced appears not only to impose a ‘lower limit’ (which is their purpose), but also an ‘upper limit’. This is not only a missed opportunity for the potentially large audience that some youth productions could appeal to, but also a missed opportunity in business terms. Playing in the evening circuit can have financial benefits since the ticket prices for individual adult visitors are higher in the evening than for school children or families during the day. Going in the other direction is a seldom explored opportunity. Many productions initially not intended for children or youth, could successfully be presented to a young audience and could be the rage in schools.

Children’s and youth productions have gradually found their way abroad, while it is not self-evident for most organisations to develop continual, robust international activities. Those that tour abroad or conclude international partnerships only sporadically, must be able to count on the one-off interventions of the Flemish government. Via collective actions and the exchange of expertise, the organisations around the performing arts for children and youth wish to strengthen one another.

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The analyses on the VTi database were done by Bart Magnus.
VTi staff who worked on the consultation platform were:
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The basic units of the performing arts database are productions from the subsidised performing arts landscape. Based on flyers, brochures, newsletters and other documentation that the companies provide, our staff create production datasheets on a daily basis containing the title of the production, artistic personnel and their function(s), producers and co-producers, the genres of the production, date and location of premiere, season and performances abroad. The ‘subsidised’ field is interpreted rather broadly. Not only productions subsidised directly by the Arts Decree (on a project basis or structurally) enter the database, but also productions that resulted from a partnership with subsidised organisations (among others festivals, arts centres, companies, workspaces, art education or social-artistic organisations). If there is doubt concerning the correctness of the data, the producers are requested to submit additional information, and at the end of each season they are given the opportunity to make corrections to the data in the database.

In this article we wished to gain insight into several characteristic features of the children’s arts sector and thus needed to select the children’s and youth productions from the totality of the performing arts database. This was done based on the genre labels that Vti personnel assign to each production based on that which the companies and producers communicate. Over the years, several genre labels have been used that can allow a production to be part of the children’s arts in broad sense. This concerns not only headings such as children’s and youth theatre, youth theatre, children’s theatre, children’s opera or children’s dance but also a range of qualifications referring to diverse forms of puppet theatre (puppet play, puppet and object theatre, puppet theatre ...) to genres such as fairy tales and sensory theatre. We categorised these labels – and all the productions to which they refer – under the ‘children and youth cluster’. In this text, when we refer to the children’s arts sector, we are talking about this cluster of productions. Productions can be assigned multiple labels. In addition to the label ‘youth theatre’, for example, the labels ‘multimedia’ and ‘on-site theatre’ can be assigned to the same production. Consequently, a production so defined will be included not only in the ‘children and youth cluster’, but it also will belong to the ‘theatre cluster’ and ‘other disciplines cluster’.

In many cases, the specific assignment of genres to clusters is clear (e.g. children’s dance belongs to the ‘children and youth cluster’ and to the ‘dance cluster’), but sometimes this is debatable. While most puppet theatre may be intended for children, this is not always the case. The same applies to a label such as sensory theatre, mostly used to categorise productions focused on sensory experiences for preschoolers, but also applicable to experience-oriented productions for adults. In this analysis, we made the choice to allow each production that bears one of these more debatable labels to be a part of the ‘children and youth cluster’.

From the programme brochure for the creation Ergens Hier by Inne Goris & Vier Winden Primary school during the 2013 edition of Kunstenfestivaldesarts.


Sorry dat ge ’t zo te weten moet komen maar beter nu dan ooit

Sofie Palmers & Annelies Van Hullebusch / TABULEUS © Clara Hermans
INTRODUCTION

This article is intended to offer the foreign reader a brief overview of the performing arts landscape for children and young people in Flanders in 2014 – a complex, rich landscape in a constant state of flux. This overview incorporates all aspects of those stage creations for children and young people that are supported by the Flemish government. The commercial circuit of cultural and leisure events for children and young people is not touched upon here.

Flanders offers a broad range of performing arts for children and young people. In the last seasons, there were an average of 160 different productions to be seen on Flemish stages per year. This represents around 20% of total performing arts production. The offering is also extremely diverse: all genres are included (text theatre, dance, puppet theatre, circus, music theatre, experiential theatre, and various combinations of the above). The creations are aimed at an audience aged between zero and eighteen years and is performed in a diverse array of locations: at theatres, arts centres, festivals, cultural centres, schools and in public spaces. Productions are created by individual artists and by small and large companies, as well as within specialist production centres, festivals, cultural centres, etc.

Below you will find a schematic summary of the different players in this field. From time to time, in order to provide examples, names of companies will be mentioned, but a comprehensive overview of
the companies will be provided in the next chapter. This overview is, by definition, limited, and it presents a simplified view of the situation. In practice, the landscape is constantly evolving, and players often move fluidly between the different categories and across genres. Fortunately, and up to a certain point, the policy framework permits this organic and permanent evolution.

**A RICH SPECTRUM**

There is a rich blend of performing arts disciplines and formats for young audiences in Flanders. This rich spectrum is difficult to subdivide into disciplinary categories. However, below we attempt to sum up the many different genres of artistic work.

**Text theatre**

Words still play an important role in children’s and youth theatre, but are often used in an alternative, non-narrative way, alongside other elements like dance, visual art and film. The creation of new literary plays for children’s and youth theatre is rather limited. Productions in which words play a leading role are usually adaptations of classic plays or other literary material, or a homemade assembly of textual material that is approached informally.

The following examples illustrate this point: *Romeo and Juliet* performed by HETPALEIS (Simon De Vos), *Josette*: an adaptation of Ionesco’s children’s stories performed by Theater FroeFroe, *Minotaurus, Icarus, Narcissus 2.0*: a trilogy featuring contemporary versions of ancient myths, performed by Barre Weldaad and ZIGZAG ZIGZAG, based on David Grossman’s *The Zigzag Kid* and performed by ZEVEN / Inne Goris.

**Dance**

The role of dance and movement in productions for children and young people has grown exponentially in recent years. A new generation of young choreographers is extremely active in the children’s arts field and often collaborates with established companies or production houses. A few examples are: Ugo Dehaes, Joke Laureyns and Kwint Manshoven (Kabinet K.), Randi De Vlieghe, Natascha Pire, Goede Van Dijck (Nat Gras), Thomas Devens, Manon Avermaete, Koen De Preter, Alexandra Meijer (Keski.e.space) and Michiel Vandevelde.

A number of companies have chosen to specialise in dance performances; many other theatre-makers integrate movement and dance into multidisciplinary creations.

**Music theatre**

The number of stage productions in which music plays a leading role is growing steadily and these are often of an exceptional quality. Theatre-makers set to work with the music of composers like Mozart, Debussy, Stockhausen and Cage, or work with contemporary composers and combine images, words and music (often performed live on stage). Companies such as Zonzo Compagnie, Theater De Spiegel, Pantalone and Tg Schemering explicitly aim their work at children. The ‘adult’ music theatre companies Walpurgis, LOD, Braakland ZheBilding and Muziektheater Transparant also regularly produce work for children and young people. De Kolonie creates productions for both children and adults.

**Puppet theatre or ‘Object theatre’**

In Belgium, the genre previously known as marionette- or puppet theatre has undergone a transformation over the years, and is now a vibrant, contemporary, often multimedia theatrical genre known as ‘figurentheater’ [object theatre]. Companies such as DE MAAN, Theater FroeFroe and Ultima Thule present innovative creations that combine various techniques: speech, acting, objects, dance, film, video, visual arts, etc.
Image/visual art and the performing arts

In recent years, images have become an increasingly important part of performances. The youngest generation of theatre-makers fluently integrates visual media into its work. Some of them go a step further and create interactive installations, or use the latest technology to create an immersive experience. The recently revamped children’s festival Stormopkomst focuses on visual art, media art, architecture and interdisciplinary art forms.

Creations with young people

Flanders boasts a unique array of professional children’s and youth theatre productions that have been created in collaboration with young people. Companies such as fABULEUS and KOPERGIETERY have considerable experience of this, but production houses like BRONKS and Muziektheater Transparant (with youth operas) and directors such as Peter Seynaeve and Alexander Devriendt also work successfully with young, inexperienced performers.

Site-specific creations and experiential productions

Just as in the adult circuit, site-specific theatre for young audiences has grown in importance. To name but a few companies: Studio ORKA is a master of the form and has performed productions in abandoned castles, containers and on patches of waste ground. BRONKS has performed in the woods, fABULEUS in the park, HETPALEIS in an old transit bus, and luxemburg brings theatre into your living room.

The expansion of the theatrical viewing experience to embrace more experiential theatre can also be seen in youth theatre. For example, Laika is brilliant at creating productions that appeal to the senses (including the taste buds), and Ontroerend Goed confronts you with your intimate self in a labyrinth of passageways and cages.

Age groups

The performing arts spectrum for children and young people is spread over a wide range of age groups, from specialist productions for the very youngest audience (for which the age limit has gone down as far as nine months and less), to exceptional work for adolescents. Companies such as Theater De Spiegel, Sprookjes enzo and Pantalone aim for the very youngest audience, while 4Hoog specialises in infant theatre.

THE CREATORS

Stage productions for children and young people are created by a variety of players: artists’ companies, production companies, individual artists, different types of venues and, occasionally, festivals.

Artists’ companies

‘Artists’ companies’ is the term we use to describe those companies that are directed by one or more artist(s). In Flanders, there are currently eleven such companies, whose major focus is to produce performing arts for young audiences, and who receive structural, multi-annual funding. In addition, there are currently about seventeen companies that receive subsidy on a project per project basis. In the following chapter you will find more detailed information about each one of them. For the so-called project companies, we have selected those that have produced at least two projects in recent years. In addition, there are a large number of occasional producers (see below: ‘Other players’).

Production houses

As well as boasting an impressive range of companies, Flanders also has four production houses that focus both on creating and on presenting stage productions for children and young people. Their origins are very diverse, but all played and still play an important
role in the development of performing arts for young audiences in Flanders. All four of them also have a venue: a public space where the presentation of performing arts, and art educational provision for children and young people are central.

**HETPALEIS** in Antwerp is the oldest and the biggest of these. It grew out of the Royal Youth Theatre, which at the time was the only large, nationally-oriented repertoire theatre for children, and still occupies a central position today. It has its own venue in the heart of the city with various performance halls, and produces a wide range of work for both the very youngest children and for adolescents, in both small- and large-scale productions. HETPALEIS does not operate with a fixed ensemble or director, but instead gives creative commissions to a very diverse range of artists and directors, and frequently collaborates with other companies. Its output is therefore rich and varied. HETPALEIS, under the direction of Barbara Wyckmans, is a lively organisation that is not afraid to take risks.

**KOPERGIETERY** in Ghent has a colourful history that dates back to 1978, when Eva Bal founded Speeltheater Gent. Bal carried out pioneering work involving children and young people in the theatre: both in terms of content, by taking their view of the world as the starting point for performances; and with regard to their active involvement, by encouraging them to participate in workshops and productions. Under the direction of Johan De Smet, KOPERGIETERY, which has been based in an old factory building since 1993, is continuing along the pathway laid out by Bal. It caters for various different aspects of art, both involving children and with children as its target audience: creating productions with professional theatre-makers, welcoming guest companies from both Belgian and foreign (youth) theatre circuits, running weekly theatre workshops with children and young people, and developing community projects. KOPERGIETERY also frequently travels both at home and abroad, and is an active member of international networks (such as the European collaborative project Fresh Tracks Europe).

Since 2009, **BRONKS** has been based in a brand new theatre in the heart of Brussels. The organisation was created in 1991 from the youth arm of the Beursschouwburg, and has been under the dynamic leadership of Oda Van Neygen right from the start (until the end of 2014). BRONKS played a pivotal role in enthusing a whole generation of theatre-makers to create work for a young audience. Many of them, such as Dimitri Leue, Inne Goris, Raven Ruëll and Pascale Platel were taking their first steps in this area. BRONKS produces new work, puts together an in-house programme, and goes on tour with the BRONKS creations. In addition, it offers a solid range of art education activities all year round. Collaboration with schools is an important part of this. The Export/Import festival in the autumn is a focal point for the presentation of work from both home and abroad. Central to all this activity is the specific, highly multicultural, multilingual world of Brussels.

The Antwerp-based **Villanella** has a unique profile. Founded in 1993 as the brainchild of Marc Verstappen, it is subsidised as an ‘arts centre’ for young people. (There are also a handful of arts centres in Flanders for adults, i.e. places for production and presentation, with a focus on contemporary arts development in an international context, including Campo, STUK, Kaaitheater, Buda and Vooruit.) Villanella has a multi-faceted, multidisciplinary operation with a strong focus on young creative talent. This translates into a wide range of activities: producing children’s and youth theatre performances, supporting young talent, organising unusual cultural events, themed social art projects and crossover projects, literature projects for young and old, etc. One of its flagships is the popular Kunstbende event, which brings together talented young artists aged between thirteen and nineteen and gives them a public platform.

Since 2011, Villanella has been based at DE Studio in Antwerp. Along with other in-house guests like Theater FroeFroe, Laika, Zonzo Compagnie, Theater De Spiegel and many other youth theatre companies, it has transformed the former theatre school into a much used stage for a young audience and a lively centre for young talent.
**Individual artists**

In recent years, a growing group of individual artists (theatre-makers, actors, directors, choreographers, etc. who are not part of a fixed company) have chosen to work in both the youth theatre and the adult theatre circuits. Artists such as Inne Goris, Randi De Vliegh, Peter Seynaeve, Pascale Platel, Joris Van den Brande and many others find the necessary framework at companies or production companies within which to develop and present innovative, high-quality work.

**Other players**

Finally, there are also a considerable number of companies who, although they do not have the ‘children’s and youth theatre’ label, regularly create work for young audiences. These include companies like Ontroerend Goed, Theater Antigone, t,arsenaal, Toneelhuis, NTGent, Skagen, de Roovers and many others. This clearly proves that young audiences are increasingly viewed as proper audiences, with the right to the same professional standards as adult audiences. An equally growing number of organisations support and/or co-produce creations for children and young people: places for artists-in-residence, festivals, cultural centres, etc. The internationally oriented Kroksufestival (co-)produces each year several productions for young audiences. In addition there are a considerable number of structures that work with and for children and adolescents but receive subsidies as cultural education organisations, such as Passerelle and Larf.

**THE PRESENTERS**

A broad network of performance locations ensures that the creations actually reach their intended young audience. Firstly, the network consists of those production and other companies who have their own theatre(s): HETPALEIS, KOPERGIETERY, BRONKS, Villanella, HET GEVOLG, DE MAAN, etc. show their own work, but also the work of others.

As far as distribution is concerned, the many cultural centres spread all over Flanders play an extremely important role. All of these locally- or regionally-oriented centres with a wide-ranging cultural offering have a children’s and youth arm. The presentation of contemporary performing arts for young audiences is a fixed part of their profile. In many cases, they also collaborate with local school communities.

In addition, a number of them organise special highlight festivals for children or young people. These include CC Kortrijk’s Spinrag, Vrijstaat O’s Springtij, Rode Hond at 30CC in Leuven, and the Babelut Festival at Dommelhof in Neerpelt (which concentrates on providing musical experiences and installations for babies and toddlers). The largest and most prominent of these festivals is Krokusfestival, which is organised each year by CC Hasselt, and which has a strong international reputation. Also worthy of mention are the aforementioned Stormopkomst Festival in Turnhout, which links performing arts, visual art and new media, and the BIG BANG festival, an adventurous music festival for young audiences that often includes music theatre performances and music installations.

Finally, a number of regular summer festivals also feature an attractive programme of performing arts work for children and young people: the Flemish Theatre Festival, Zomer van Antwerpen, MiraMiro in Ghent, Theater aan Zee in Ostend and the biannual Theater op De Markt festival in Hasselt.
THE INTERNATIONAL PLAYERS

What goes for the entire performing arts field in Flanders is also true for children’s and youth productions: international performances and co-productions are the norm for many companies. Flemish performing arts for young audiences are a much-prized export product. Flemish youth productions are regular visitors to European countries such as the Netherlands, Germany, France, Austria, Great Britain and Denmark, but this work can also be seen elsewhere in Europe and beyond, as far away as Canada, the United States, Australia and New Zealand. Both old hands and new faces enjoy international success. A number of Flemish players also strengthen their international position by actively participating in multi-year collaborative projects supported by the European Union.

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PART 2

PROFILES
Production company 4Hoog began life in 1997 on the fourth floor of an apartment building in Ghent. Founders Caroline Lanoye and Raf Walschaerts wished to fill a void in the Flemish theatre landscape by making productions for preschoolers. Since 2009, the artistic direction of 4Hoog has been in the hands of Frans Van der Aa.

4Hoog makes theatre for children, with a focus on audiences three and older. The company aims with its productions to assist its young audience in their development. 4Hoog creations are often narrative and poetic. Recognisable emotions, imagination and humour play a central role, and various art disciplines are combined. The often-presented *The king without shoes* (2007) is a musical and visual fairy tale about sorrow, hope and happiness directed by Van der Aa, with text by Raf Walschaerts. In *De Tip van je Tenen* (2013), a co-production with HETPALEIS, four reciter-singers, two musicians, a choir and a live artist introduce the young audience to poetry.

In addition to the creations of Van der Aa, 4Hoog regularly produces the work of freelance theatre makers. By giving them the opportunity to create their own productions and supporting them in this, the company aims to generate enthusiasm for the performing arts for young children. *KEIK* premiered in 2011: a mix of wordless acting before and behind a scrim, video images, animation and live music with which film maker-director Jonas Baeckeland takes the audience on an adventuresome quest through the four seasons. With *Menskes* (2013), a tragicomic story about loss that is recognisable to young and old, Jan Sobrie and Tom Dupont wrote and directed their first piece for preschoolers. *Wanikan* (2010) was created in the context of d-Buut, a biennial project with which 4Hoog supports young professional makers interested in theatre for children. Jelle Marteel created a playful movement-production full of images that invite fanciful interpretation by the viewer.
Since 2007, 4Hoog has been working out of De Kazematten, an old Ghent factory building that the production company shares with puppet theatre company Ultima Thule. De Kazematten is presently being converted into a true theatre, with infrastructure that will allow the presentation of productions.

4Hoog performs in Flanders, Brussels, and Wallonia, with regular productions also in the Netherlands and France.
Barre Weldaad

Barre Weldaad creates imaginative spoken theatre for children, young people and adults. Writer, director and dramaturge Stef Driezen founded the company in 1997. In 2010, the in-house director and stage designer Barbara Vandendriessche took over from him as artistic director.

Barre Weldaad regularly draws inspiration for its productions from myths and other classic tales. The recent Narcissus 2.0 (2013), for example, is a contemporary version of the story from Greek mythology. Barbara Vandendriessche directed a performance about an insecure teenager fleeing from himself and from the World Wide Web, with a poetic script that she wrote in collaboration with Herman van de Wijdeven, as well as dance, live music and a soundscape. Narcissus 2.0 is the final piece in a trilogy that also included Icarus (2009) and Minotaurus (2008). The family musical ‘t Zit zo! (2012) was based on Rudyard Kipling’s Just So Stories from 1902.

Alongside reworkings of the classics, the telling of painfully realistic contemporary tales is also an important part of Barre Weldaad’s work. Vliegevleugelbommenwerper (2011) is a modern day Romeo and Juliet for children, set in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Barre Weldaad’s creations are often about life in difficult circumstances. Dark themes are dealt with in a poetic way.

After a number of years exclusively spent making theatre for a young audience, Barre Weldaad has recently begun creating work for the adult theatre again. 2013 saw the premiere of Acqua Azzurra, a performance for adults with text by Peter Terrin.

Since 2012, Barre Weldaad has been based in Brussels. www.barreweldaad.be
Braakland/ZheBilding

Braakland/ZheBilding (BZB) specifically markets itself as a company of creators: a group of theatre-makers taking a common path, all seeking to appeal to the spectator’s auditory imagination. Braakland/ZheBilding’s artistic directors are the writers and directors Stijn Devillé and Adriaan Van Aken, and dramaturge Els Theunis. They have been awarded numerous prizes, among which the Flemish Culture Prize for the Performing Arts in 2011.

Braakland/ZheBilding creates theatre to please the ear. It also opts for an organic combination of spoken text and contemporary alternative music: crossovers between rock, jazz, folk, punk, minimal music and electro. The company plays with the quality of the voice and narrative perspectives. It attempts to turn literary text into something sensual, rhythmic, musical and theatrical. Braakland/ZheBilding’s performances are characterised by their plain speaking, and by their head-on addresses to the audience, but they cannot be described as sung theatre. What chiefly interests the company is the area between speaking and singing.

The company always starts out with a socially relevant theme. Its members fully opt for creation: each project starts from scratch. Music is composed and a script is written. The group wants to talk about what is happening now, or at least, about matters that are not yet resolved, and whose after-effects can still be felt. The city is Braakland’s favourite biotope.

Now and then, Braakland also creates performances for children. For example, Station (2014), a co-production with Zonzo Compagnie and a follow-up to Wagon (2010), is a wordless performance with two electric trains, which toured around Belgium and Europe for two years. In Aan Tafel! (2013), a collaboration with HETPALEIS, two musicians improvise with words and drawings created by the audience.

www.braakland.be
BRONKS

BRONKS is a Brussels children’s art house with an accent on theatre. It was established in 1991 at the initiative of Oda Van Neygen, and since 2009 the organisation has a permanent home on the Brussels Varkensmarkt. BRONKS aims with its artistic and art education activities to stimulate children, youth and their environment to discover and explore the possibilities in ourselves and in the world.

Each season BRONKS invites several artists to make a production for children or youth. This results in three in-house productions per year, presented not only in the BRONKS theatre, but also on tour. A new theatre text is written for many BRONKS creations. By offering both starting theatre makers and established names and artists from other disciplines the opportunity to create their first performance for children, BRONKS aims to generate enthusiasm for the performing arts for a young audience.

Outstanding BRONKS productions include Pascale Platel’s Ola Pola Potloodgat (2001), Assepoester (Cinderella) (2002) by Mieja Hollevoet and Stoksielalleen (2004) by Raven Ruëll. These three productions won the 1000 Watt prize for the most impressive production for children and youth from Flanders and the Netherlands, and Ola Pola Potloodgat was also awarded the Grote Theaterfestivalprijs.

A recent BRONKS creation is Toink (2014), a production without real words that aims to inspire its audience of seven years and older to a highly imaginative way of looking, and for which inspiration was taken from the cinematic universe of Jacques Tati. Previously Joost Vandecasteele and Joris Van den Brande with Sorry voor alles (2013) wrote a piece for youth with existential questions at the centre. Heft uw voeten op is a production for children by Titus De Voogdt, Joris Hessels and Ruth Beeckmans that premiered in March 2014.

In addition to its own work, BRONKS also presents guest productions from beginning and experienced companies and makers from Flanders, the Netherlands and sometimes from other countries. Moreover, BRONKS has attention not only for theatre, but also for music, dance, the visual arts and film.
De Bende van de Prins

De Bende van de Prins is the company founded by writer and actor Pepijn Lievens, which makes theatre for teenagers. Using text and an expressive acting style, influenced by slapstick and mime, de Bende aims to dramatise stories about themes that touch on young people’s everyday lives. The performances typically employ a sober, evocative stage design, and feature a combination of storytelling and acting. Humour, seriousness and unexpected twists alternate in rapid succession. Mich Walschaerts is the in-house director. For the majority of productions, de Bende is supplemented by guest actors.

In 2008, de Bende van de Prins made its debut with *Stofzuiger*, a tragicomic autobiographical monologue in which Pepijn Lievens talks about his drug addiction and about kicking the habit. In *Averechts* (2010), Lievens and Wouter Bruneel interpret the life of Henry Tandey, an English soldier who became a hero during the First World War, but who, despite his good intentions, had an unfortunate influence on world history. One moment, the actors get under the skin of the character whose story they are telling, only to distance themselves from it the next. For *Donderdag* (2013) Lievens adapted *Romeo and Juliet* to create a contemporary, Flemish love story for two actors.

BRONKS has developed extensive educational activities for schools as well as for children and youth who wish to pursue the performing arts in their free time. Students and teachers can come to BRONKS for school performances, introductions, post-performance discussions, workshops and long-term theatre projects. Via STUDIO BRONKS, the house organises workshops outside school hours in which children and youth can actively explore the theatre medium.

From 2012, the BRONKSfestival – a yearly event with in-house and guest performances, workshops and programmes in the margins of the festival – was replaced after twenty editions by three festivals that also address new target groups. EXPORT/IMPORT always takes place in November and is an international youth theatre festival in the Brussels city centre. Productions from Belgium and abroad are without words or are played and surtitled in Dutch, French and English. In this way, BRONKS opens the doors to foreign language audiences and aims to attract the attention of foreign performing arts programmers. With BRONKS XL, a festival for youth between twelve and twenty that takes place in April, BRONKS is expanding its activities for youth. Finally, the annual season finale C’EST PARTY! finds its context in the dialogue BRONKS has with the urban neighbourhood where it is located.

In November 2014, Oda Van Neygen will be handing over the artistic reins of BRONKS to Veerle Kerckhoven and Marij De Nys.

www.bronks.be

www.debendevandeprins.com
DE KOLONIE MT

DE KOLONIE MT is the music theatre company led by composer and multi-instrumentalist Bo Spaenc. Transdisciplinarity and eclecticism characterise the company’s work. A wide range of musical genres are presented, with instruments from all over the world played together, or alongside everyday objects that can be used to create sounds. Instrumental music, song, dance and movement, text and puppets are combined to create new entities. For every production, DE KOLONIE MT writes new compositions and scripts.

In 2008, Spaenc founded DE KOLONIE MT as the successor to De Vikingen, with which he had made musical performances for children. Since then, the company has been concentrating on two target groups: adults and infants. With ScattiWhatti (2013), DE KOLONIE MT created a performance, for the very youngest children, on the practice of scat singing: the improvised singing of nonsense words commonly used in jazz music. Before that came Lap (2012), a musical and dance creation about our own place in the world, with puppets by Jan Maillard; and rAAm (2010), an almost wordless performance with a life-size puppet theatre as a stage set, in which two actors dance, sing and make music. UMM (2004), on the other hand, is a universal tale by Paul Verrept, based on the life of the Egyptian singer Umm Kulthum.

Collaboration is an essential part of the work of DE KOLONIE MT. It encourages not only artists from a variety of disciplines, but also experienced artists, artists new to the scene, and artists from a range of different backgrounds to enter into dialogue with one another. In Pia Madre (2013), a co-production with Theater Stap, artists both with and without disabilities perform on stage side by side. Furthermore, for each production, DE KOLONIE MT seeks out other organisations that can complement and support the company.

DE MAAN

DE MAAN makes visual theatre for a young audience, though the company also explores the limits with adult theatre. DE MAAN is a continuation of the Hopla puppet theatre that was established in 1948 by Jef Contryn and which developed into the Mechelen City Puppet Theatre in 1965. In 1995, Jef Contryn’s son Louis passed the directorship on to Willem Verheyden, who changed the name of the company to DE MAAN and wrote and directed many pieces. Since October 2013, director and author Stef De Paepe is artistic director and general director. The present house explores the limits with the broader visual performance genres. Sometimes with new media, sometimes based on text, sometimes based on objects. But always adventurous in its choices of both the scenic elements used and the makers.

Most of the puppets at DE MAAN were created by Paul Contryn, the son of Louis Contryn, who is scenographer, puppet maker and puppeteer with the company. For each production, Paul Contryn starts from scratch, which result in puppets in diverse styles and materials.

Outstanding productions include Nimmermeer [Nevermore] (2008) directed by Stef Lernous (Abattoir Fermé), which was selected for the Flemish Theatre Festival 2009, and Kijk eens wat ik kan (2008), which toured in Europe, among others in Switzerland and France. Given the visual character of the productions, the company aims to focus more strongly on internationalisation.
DE MAAN works out of Mechelen where the company has its own theatre infrastructure. In the future, DE MAAN will also be welcoming guests and thus develop into an open house for the visual performing arts for young audiences with a focus on production and welcoming guest makers.

www.demaan.be
De Nietjesfabriek

De Nietjesfabriek is the group centred on the theatre-maker, writer and actor Freek Mariën and actress, theatre-maker and designer Sarah Van Overwaelle. The company creates productions on major themes, which it approaches in an imaginative way designed to appeal to children. A combination of poetic texts and fabulous images is De Nietjesfabriek’s trademark.

In 2009, De Nietjesfabriek made its debut with Derwazeens, a comforting fairy tale about illness and death, aimed at anyone over six, presented in a ‘home-made’ stage set and using puppets. Vergiet (2011) is a performance about dementia. Freek Mariën’s script was awarded the Kaas en Kappes Prize, a prize for the best youth-theatre play from the Dutch-German language area. With Altijd tijd voor taart (2012), a creation for audiences of ten years and over, De Nietjesfabriek tackled the theme of time. For Wachten en andere heldendaden (2014), the company is working with the young theatre collective Ballet Dommage.

www.denietjesfabriek.be
fABULEUS

fABULEUS is a production house for young theatre and dance talent. There are two clearly delineated production paths. The first is a quite unique professional production platform for young people from around fifteen years and up. The second offers an artistic context to recent theatre or dance graduates who are creating the first work of their own at fABULEUS, which often focuses on a young audience.

Both young people and young professionals are offered made-to-measure guidance, and create performances alongside more experienced theatre-makers from a wide range of contexts and circuits. This means that fABULEUS produces a diverse range of different theatrical genres: theatre, dance and more hybrid or performance-type productions. The creations, which are always of a high artistic quality, whilst remaining accessible, are presented to a wide audience, with a particular focus on children and young people. fABULEUS’ artistic core comprises the artistic director Dirk De Lathauwer and the dramaturge Peter Anthonissen, and the company has collaborated with, and continues to collaborate with a network of linked choreographers that is as diverse as it is wide, which includes Alexandra Broeder, Randi De Vlieghe, Natascha Pire, Koen De Preter, Carl von Winckelmann, Jef Van gestel, Andros Zins-Browne and Ugo Dehaes, who will shortly be joined by others including Nicole Beutler, Albert Quesada and Jan Martens.

Since its founding in 1996, fABULEUS has created some 80 productions. Stand-out productions have included Speelregels (based on the novel by Floortje Zwigtman, 2004) featuring Steven Beersmans, which was performed a total of 150 times in Flanders, and Pitsers (2009), a collaboration with the then-new collective Tuning People. 2007 saw the premiere of We dance to forget. In this predominately international and often revived co-production by fABULEUS and arts centre STUK, Koen De Preter and Maria Ibarretxe danced to over-familiar pop songs in a mix of dance styles. Everland (2010) – the Michael Jackson-inspired performance by Natascha Pire and Dirk De Lathauwer, which toured extensively in the Netherlands – was also immersed in the same pop theme. There were also a striking number of novel adaptations, including Playground Love (Kazuo Ishiguro, 2009) Ik ben geen racist (Per Nilsson, 2010) and Speeldrift (Juli Zeh, 2011) by Dirk De Lathauwer and Ruth Mellaerts. Following on from We dance to forget, dance productions such as Blauwe Storm (2011) by Randi De Vlieghe and Kijk ver genoeg achterom en je kijkt weer naar voor (2012) by Manon Avermaete opened more and more international doors for the work of fABULEUS and its artists. It was no coincidence that a large number of the productions with international potential were dance productions aimed at a young audience (6+), an area in which fABULEUS has been proud to play a leading role over the past few years.

Among fABULEUS’ more recent productions are Ugo Dehaes’ and Natascha Pires’ GIRLS (2013), a choreography for eight teenage girls with their own breathing as the only soundtrack. For Othello (2013) director Carl von Winckelmann translated and adapted Shakespeare’s classic to create a piece acted by seven young people, and with Love Songs (veldeke) (2013) Michiel Vander Velde created a performance about love and politics, sung and danced by nine young people. In dUb (2014), the choreographer Karolien Verlinden and the sound artist Wannes Deneer, together with a cast of fourteen young dancers, explore how sounds stimulate our imagination and create expectations. Snipperdagen (2014), made by Lisa Verbelen, Katrien Valckenaers and Filip Bilsen, looks at adult life from a formal angle that is quite extreme.

In 2015 and 2016, two highly-successful pieces from previous years are to be revived: ZOO doen ze de dingen by Randi De Vlieghe, a co-production with HETPALEIS from 2012, will be the first to make a comeback in 2015. A revival of Tape for kleuters, a co-production with Tuning People from 2010, is to follow in 2016.

Alongside its extensive production work, fABULEUS groups together a number of small and experimental projects under the title ONDERSTROOM. A good example is DE BARBAREN, in which eight young people immerse themselves in the productions selected for the Flemish Theatre Festival. One of 2013’s most striking projects.
was Re:Rosas, the fabULEUS Rosas Remix Project, which fabULEUS created alongside Anne Teresa De Keersmaeker’s dance company Rosas; this led to the submission of over 250 YouTube versions of the famous chair scene from Rosas danst Rosas.

fabULEUS’ home base is OPEK, a former customs building in Leuven that is also used by the music theatre company Braakland/ZheBilding, the art educational organisations Artforum, Mooss and WISPER, and parts of the LUA School of Arts and 30CC (Leuven’s cultural centre). From the 2015-2016 season onwards, fabULEUS will also be developing a dance programme for a young audience, in collaboration with and based at arts centre STUK.

www.fabuleus.be
Het Banket

Het Banket was established in 2009 by Brechtje Louwaard and Tristan Versteven. The two actors met each other in HETPALEIS, where they worked together on youth productions such as Orestes (2001) by Piet Arfeuille and De winter onder de tafel (2001) and Marianne! (een koningsdrama) (2005) by Peter De Graef. This collaboration inspired them to write their own stories for children and adults. In order to stage these stories in full freedom, they created their own company.

The first production by Het Banket was Fathers and eggs, a philosophical and humorous piece on men, women and children, love and birth. Louwaard and Versteven previously presented this production for audiences ten and older, directed by Peter De Graef based on a text by Heleen Verburg, under the auspices of HETPALEIS. In 2009 they performed Fathers and eggs in Osaka, and since then Het Banket has been presenting it in Flanders.

Since 2010, Het Banket has also been presenting its own texts, written by Louwaard and Versteven and performed in collaboration with guest actors. Major themes and philosophical questions play a central role in the highly imaginative productions of Het Banket. Thanks to their different layers, they speak to both young and old. Eiland Lucretia (2010) is a story about two young people caring for their seriously ill mother – played by Reinhilde Decleir – who use their imaginations to learn to deal with the reality they are facing. With Het land is stil (2011), Het Banket created a production about the last people on earth, and Koning van de slaap (2012) is a cruel and humorous fairy tale about a country in revolt. Dokter Szvo premiered in 2014. Louwaard and Versteven were accompanied by Stefaan Degand in these three productions.

Het Banket has been supported since its formation by the cultural centre of Mechelen.

www.hetbanket.be
Perceval adapts Der kleine König Dezember by the German writer Axel Hacke. Juul (2015), a performance without words, will have a theme that is rather more raw: it is to be a performance about a child who is badly bullied, and about the everlasting scars that this leaves behind.

www.hetgevolg.be

In the past, the production company HETGEVOLG created spoken theatre for a wide audience. HETGEVOLG was founded in Turnhout in 1984 by the director and actor Ignace Cornelissen. In January 2014, the actor, theatre-maker and writer Stefan Perceval succeeded him as general manager and artistic director. In the past, Perceval created all kinds of performances for children and young people, including at HETPALEIS.

Under Perceval’s leadership, HETGEVOLG aims to be an artistically-minded environment in which children and young people can experience the power of theatre in its many-layered splendour. HETGEVOLG also actively seeks out young people in Turnhout: via schools and youth organisations, but also specifically via organisations aimed at children from a less privileged background. HETGEVOLG opens its doors to social organisations in Turnhout by developing and implementing joint projects with them. The productions that come out of this can be supported and disseminated by HETGEVOLG from its home base. HETGEVOLG aims to be the epicentre from which all these positive vibrations spread out over the whole Campines region and far beyond. HETGEVOLG also aims to be a centre of research, where the possibilities, boundaries and challenges of theatre for children and young people can be identified and tested.

In 2013, HETGEVOLG presented Matador, a Stijn van de Wiel creation. This production, which is aimed at an audience aged fourteen and up, looks at the relationship between young people’s dreams and their parents’ expectations. Delphine en haar vriend (2012) is a family performance featuring words by Cornelissen, music, projections and a large puppet. In 2014, HETGEVOLG co-produced the infant performance Straks is nu gedaan (2014) by Nelle Demaeyer (Vanelle). DE BARBAREN (a co-production with MartHa!tentatief, 2014) is a performance aimed at those aged thirteen and over, about three young people who are brought together by a series of bizarre events. For Kleine Koning December (2014, a collaboration with HETPALEIS), Stefan
HETPALEIS

HETPALEIS is an Antwerp theatre house for children, youth and artists. It emerged in 1997 from the Antwerp Royal Youth Theatre at the initiative of director Barbara Wyckmans. HETPALEIS aims to make the performing arts familiar to a young audience: core objectives include presenting accessible quality and making quality accessible to each child.

HETPALEIS is strongly focused on in-house productions and co-productions for a young audience, and creating children’s productions for the larger venues - without losing sight of the work for smaller venues. HETPALEIS productions make use of diverse art disciplines. Prinses Turandot (2011), an opera fairy-tale for preschoolers, was created in partnership with WALPURGIS. A narrator, two singers and a multi-instrumentalist present a story about love and music based on the work of classical composers such as Lully, Mozart, Wagner, Bizet and Puccini. Wulong (2013), by Iris Bouche and Kobe Proesmans, is a production based on elements of Chinese culture. Dance, puppet theatre and music unite in a grand fairy tale. With Azen (2014), Dimitri Leue again staged the adaptation of Shakespeare’s Othello for teenagers that he made at HETPALEIS in 2002. In the new Azen, in addition to playing with language, a central role is reserved for the tango.

HETPALEIS productions are presented not only in-house, but also on tour. Moreover, a few years ago HETPALEIS converted an old transit bus into a mobile theatre in which children can attend a production at school, at a playground or on a square in their neighbourhood. Via the geographical distribution of its productions and its on-location projects such as the HETPALEIS bus, the house aims to allow as many children as possible to enjoy the performing arts. Since the autumn of 2013, internationalisation has also been an explicit focus.

HETPALEIS has developed extensive educational activities for schools as well as for children and youth in their free time. In support of specific productions, the house creates course material and organises class preparations, introductions and post-performance discussions. Workshops on diverse art disciplines are organised for children, youth and their supervisors in De Tuin. The workshops by De Stal offer all between eight and eighteen the opportunity to actively experience how theatre is made. Since 2012, HETPALEIS has also been the driving force behind HETSTEEN, an active learning house in Het Steen, the oldest construction in Antwerp, where children can experiment around the theme of ‘time’.

HETPALEIS is explicitly committed to the arts for children. The children’s art charter was launched in 2008 in the context of the house’s tenth anniversary. By signing this charter, Flemish cities commit themselves to consistently placing the arts for children on the political agenda. For the rest, HETPALEIS works not only with experienced, but also with beginning theatre makers. In 2013, Simon De Vos adapted Shakespeare’s Romeo and Juliet into a piece for youth 16 and older, with actors in training and newly graduated players on stage. For the visual music theatre production GODFRIED (2013), a co-production of HETPALEIS and Firma Rieks Swarte for audiences eight years and older, Annelies Van Hullebusch and Steven de Jong took inspiration from the life and work of Godfried Bomans. By offering beginning artists opportunities, HETPALEIS intends to contribute to the intake of new talent in theatre for children and youth.
JAN

JAN is the group centred on director Peter Seynaeve and dramaturge Ans Vroom, which makes performances with young people for an audience aged sixteen and up. The company came into being during the creation of As you like it (2006) at Toneelhuis: this was where Seynaeve and Vroom worked together for the first time, adapting Shakespeare’s classic into a performance acted by nine boys aged between fifteen and twenty. JAN took over the production from Toneelhuis and toured with it.

After As you like it, BRONKS invited JAN to make Je ne comprends pas (2006), a short performance about the impossibility of saying goodbye, with a young girl in the leading role. A series of in-house productions then followed. Victor (2013), a duet for an adult dancer and a boy created by Peter Seynaeve and choreographer Jan Martens, is a collaboration between JAN and CAMPO.

JAN’s performances are first and foremost portraits of people and relationships, and typically express strong emotions. For example, Betty & Morris (2010) depicts love in the different phases of a human life. Mondays (2009) is about the phenomenon of high school shootings, with as the central characters two teenage girls who are tired of life, and in Thierry (2007) the spectator gets to know a seventeen-year-old boy who has decided to commit suicide. Cement (2008), based on Ian McEwan’s novel The Cement Garden, presents the story of four children who are left alone after the death of their parents, and who shut themselves off from the world and create their own universe, in which they make the rules.

Austerity is one of JAN’s key characteristics. Seynaeve prefers sleek design and stillness. He selects words and movements sparingly and in a considered manner. JAN strives towards authenticity on stage, which is why it chooses to work with young, untrained actors, directed by Seynaeve.

www.janweb.be
Kaaiman

Kaaiman is a breeding ground for young people with an interest in the performing arts. Young people aged between eleven and nineteen years and professional coaches make theatre together, from initial ideas to finished performances with teenagers on stage. Kaaiman is a structural partner of the Warande cultural centre in Turnhout, where it also has its home base. Additionally, it collaborates with the Turnhout-based companies Het Gevolg and Theater Stap. Kaaiman’s core artistic team consists of the theatre-makers Nathalie Roymans, Bart Van Gyseghem, Stijn van de Wiel and Dominique Hoste.

Kaaiman’s operations can be divided into two key parts: workshops and productions. During Kaaiman workshops, groups of youngsters search for and develop their talents in the performing arts field, working to create short productions that are presented during the Kaaiman festival, which is held each spring in the Warande. For Kaaiman productions, which are full-evening creations, young people rehearse for a full year under the guidance of a professional director. In both its workshops and its productions, Kaaiman always starts out with topics that deeply interest both the teenagers taking part and their coaches. The complexity of life and the way teenagers learn to cope with it are key themes.

A recent Kaaiman production was *Metamorfosen* (2013). Along with three young actors, director Simon De Vos created a performance about change, based on Ovid’s tales, featuring words, movement and live music. In *Doolhoofd – a mazing story* (2012), the central themes are the loss of first love, and the search for truth. Kaaiman coach Stijn van de Wiel and writer Wim Paeshuyse directed six girls and wrote the script, and photographer Dries Segers created an interplay of projections. *Alice, klein, klein beesteke* (2012) is a Kaaiman and Theater Stap co-production. Director Bart Van Gyseghem adapted Lewis Carroll’s tale of Alice in Wonderland to create a visual and musical performance which is performed by a cast of Kaaiman youngsters and disabled actors, and which repositions the dividing line between ‘normal’ and ‘weird’.

www.dekaaiman.be
Kabinet K.

Kabinet K. is a dance company founded by Joke Laureyns and Kwint Manshoven. Laureyns and Manshoven are both choreographers, with backgrounds in philosophy and design respectively. In Kabinet K., they focus on dance performances with both professional dancers and children. Their dance language starts out with concrete everyday actions and small gestures, interwoven with playful elements. As the cast also contains children, the company succeeds in appealing to a broad audience in an accessible way. As organic and intuitive states are so important, both choreographers like to work with children, or with older bodies, which are not (or are less) marked by particular patterns of behaviour or by a single dance technique.

In Kabinet K.’s creations, content triumphs over aesthetics. The dance language is developed around a central thought, which is expressed for a younger audience in the movement, the scenography, the cast and the rhythm of the performance. Since 2002, under the guidance of a number of larger youth theatre companies such as Fabuleus and Kopergietery, Joke Laureyns and Kwint Manshoven have created a series of performances that have not gone unnoticed in the youth dance world. For Kopergietery, Laureyns and Manshoven each created a separate solo for a young child: Martha, Marthe (2007). For Questo Ricordo (Kokus festival, CC Hasselt, 2006), the pair worked with seven children, three professional dancers (including Manshoven himself) and an older man. The encounters between young and older bodies, and between still developing, professionally moulded and more fragile bodies made the creation into a charming portrait of rhythms and timbres, in movement, scenography and sound décor. With performances such as Einzelgänger (2008), Unfold (2009) and I see you (2012), Kabinet K. continued to build on its oeuvre of fully-fledged dance performances for a young audience. For zwaluwzang / a swallow song (2013), Kabinet K. worked with a dancer from Theater Stap. rauw / raw (2013) was a recent performance about survival, with music by Thomas Devos, and with seven children and two adult dancers on stage.

www.kabinetk.be
Keski.e.space

Keski.e.space is the organisation centred on the choreographer Alexandra Meijer. The company creates site-specific dance performances for a young audience. Their visual dance language alternates recognisable everyday movements with abstract ones, rendering the performances accessible, without being superficial.

Keski.e.space deliberately chooses site-specific projects in order to create artistic productions in the midst of everyday reality. The company delights in harnessing the recognisability of the locations, as well as their peculiar or surprising sides. The focus is always on the dialogue between the artistic concept and the location, which together form the starting point for each production. These influence, inspire and comment on one another.

Keski.e.space wants to invite the spectator to take a fresh look at their own daily context; to get to know new places or to experience familiar places differently. In Coup’ Gazon (2010), for children aged four plus, the leading role was played by two lawnmowers and a patch of lawn. The performance Bodyscan (2011) was set in empty hospitals and old people’s homes, and featured a mix of dance, performance, sound art and moving images. Bib-lieb, (2013) is a children’s dance performance about and with books. During this performance, you literally step into the world of the library, where you discover a story full of movement amongst the books.

www.keskiespace.be
KOPERGIETERY

KOPERGIETERY is a Ghent-based children’s arts centre with a focus on theatre, dance and music. The company emerged from Speelteater Gent, which was founded by Eva Bal in 1978 as a ‘drama centre’ with an emphasis on theatre for and by young people. In 1993, Speelteater took up residence in an abandoned factory where copper had been cast. In 2003, Eva Bal passed on the artistic leadership of KOPERGIETERY to Johan De Smet.

KOPERGIETERY has three major activities. It makes children’s productions with professional theatre makers, including Johan De Smet. It also has an extended welcoming function: companies from Belgian and foreign (youth) theatre circuits are regularly invited to perform. Finally, in the Theatre Ateliers, children and youth work under the guidance of directors, musicians, choreographers, film makers and theatre teachers on projects that are presented to an audience. Some of the atelier projects develop into travelling productions. Eva Bal coaches KOPERGIETERY’s atelier activities.

As a company for young people, KOPERGIETERY works not only with experienced theatre makers: starting makers are also given a chance. Young artists are guided artistically and productionally with a view toward career advancement. For the rest, KOPERGIETERY is strongly committed to co-productions and international activities via collaboration with foreign organisations and international tours. Also distinctive for the company is its attention to diverse art disciplines. Its in-house productions often are a combination of theatre, dance, music and video.

One of KOPERGIETERY’s latest creations is The history of the world (based on banalities) (2013) directed by Johan De Smet. Together with guitarist Geoffrey Burton, Titus De Voogdt presents a production that combines the essential with the everyday. The (im)possible friendship between Augustine and Stef premiered in 2013, a musical movement duet for a man and a child created by Seppe Baeyens for audiences eight and older.

In addition to its atelier projects, KOPERGIETERY also creates productions with children and youth in the Theatre Ateliers that are intended from the start of the creative process to be travelling productions. With Charlotte (2012), Eva Bal together with seven young actors created a multidisciplinary production based on the poetry of a teenage girl who decides to take her own life. For Pigeon (2014), a co-production with the Scottish Lyra Theatre, Jo Timmins and Dominique Collet direct four children from Ghent and four children from Edinburgh.

KOPERGIETERY attaches great importance to commitment to their city. Since 2009, the company has been involved in the urban renewal project ‘Bruggen naar Rabot [Bridges to Rabot]’. In a second theatre in Ghent’s Rabot district, projects are developed with and productions presented for the children of the district. KOPERGIETERY also enters into partnerships with the neighbourhood’s existing structures.

www.kopergietery.be
Krokusfestival

The Krokusfestival is Flanders’ leading arts festival for a young audience. The festival, which is organised by the cultural centre in Hasselt, has been running since 1996. Artistic director Gerhard Verfaillie is the driving force behind it. The Krokusfestival started out as a regional, participatory event, but from 2003 its priorities became more ambitious: internationalisation, stimulating creation and production, a focus on dance, and bringing about encounters within the sector. In order to achieve these goals, between 2004 and 2008 the festival was organised only every two years while financial options were explored. From 2008, financing came from both Flemish project grants and European funds. This led to the creation of an alternating annual structure: Krokus Dans (odd years) and a multidisciplinary XL version (even years). Since 2013, the festival has received an structural subsidy from the Flemish government and has become an annual, multidisciplinary festival. In addition to theatre, music and dance, there will also be space for installations, performances, literature and sound art.

The Krokusfestival is not a ‘greatest hits’ festival, but a place to experience new theatre-makers and new creations. The festival actively seeks out new work from abroad and gives it its Belgian premiere. Flemish artists are encouraged to create new work for a young audience. A large number of Flemish companies have found their way onto stages (in Belgium and abroad) via the Krokusfestival, including fABULEUS, Nat Gras and Tuning People. In addition, the Krokusfestival aims to provide opportunities for young theatre makers, such as Manon Avermaete, Joris Van Oosterwijk, Nikè Moens and Arnaud Deflem. Finally, the Krokusfestival is also active as a (co-)producer, and has co-produced productions with Nat Gras, Circ’ombelico, fABULEUS, Ultima Vez, Keski.e.space, etc. The festival’s own productions include Als de deur gesloten is, moogt ge niet binnenkomen (2010, Annelies Van Hullebusch, Marjolein Frijling, Katrien Pierlet and Sofie Palmers), zwaluw zang / a swallow song (2013, with Theater STAP and Joke Laureyns), HUIS (2014, Jelle Marteel and Seppe Van den Berghe – on location in living rooms) and Kaauwbooj (2014, Arnaud Deflem – puppet theatre on location).

The Krokusfestival is also intended to play a role with regard to arts professionals working for young audiences both in Belgium and abroad, and wants to stimulate reflection on art. Each festival offers a wide range of opportunities for professional encounters, in the form of round table discussions, symposia, formal and informal meetings, etc. The festival always tries to stimulate dialogue between Flemish artists and their colleagues from abroad. Furthermore, during the summer months it organises an international master-class for artists and researchers.

The Krokusfestival, a member of Assitej, goes to great lengths to position itself internationally, was a member of the European dance network Fresh Tracks Europe, and is involved as a partner with its successor, Next Tracks.

www.krokusfestival.be
Laika

Laika makes ‘theatre for the senses’: text theatre and sensory creations for children, adolescents and adults. The company was founded in 1991 by Jo Roets and Greet Vissers under the name Blauw Vier. When Vissers left in 2001, Blauw Vier was renamed Laika. Today the artistic core of Laika consists of Jo Roets, Peter De Bie and dramaturge Mieke Versyp.

A central theme of Laika is ‘discovery’: for each production, the company searches for the most appropriate form to give the audience an unprecedented experience. In this, the company collaborates with artists from various disciplines.

Binding force of Laika is author and director Jo Roets. He reduces classic, complex literary texts to their essence in productions for a young audience. In an adaptation for teenagers of Shakespeare’s Othello (2011), he together with Greet Vissers reduced the number of characters to three. Misdaad en straf [Crime and Punishment], Roets’ and Vissers’ theatre version of Dostoyevsky’s novel for those fourteen and older, a co-production with kunstZ, premiered in 2014. Roets also adapts stories by contemporary writers for children and youth. For Kleine Sofie [Little Sophie] (2010), co-produced by Theater FroeFroe and HETPALEIS, he and Marc Maillard adapted the children’s book by Els Pelgrom and Thé Tjong-Khing into a production with puppets and actors. For Suikerspin [Candyfloss] (2013), Roets directed the theatre adaptation that Erik Vlaminck made of his own novel, and for Zetels van goud [Chairs of Gold] (2012), a theatre text by Rachida Lamrabat.

Peter De Bie together with Jo Roets is responsible for the artistic direction of Laika. In 1998, De Bie presented his first production, the culinary peep show PEEP&EAT. He became the driving force behind a series of creations in which theatre was linked to gastronomy and other sensory experiences. In these productions, tasting, smelling and feeling are as important as watching and listening. Generating interaction among the audience and between the audience and the makers is always a central element. A recent sensory project specifically for children is Aromagic (2014), in which De Bie playfully and excitingly acquaints the young audience with ‘taste’. Laika and Circo Ripopolo earlier combined a three-course dinner with slapstick in Cucinema (2010), and together with Muziektheater Transparant, Laika created Opera Buffa (2012), a quirky adaptation of Mozart’s Don Giovanni that interweaves music, singing, acting and ... chocolate.

Jo Roets and Peter De Bie usually contribute intensely to each other’s creations, with Roets focusing on text and direction, and De Bie creating total environments – based on scenography and possible sensory elements – that involve the audience more strongly in the production. Laika also regularly welcomes young makers. In 2012, Judith de Joode made NIPT, an intimate and visual production about tolerance in interpersonal relationships. Noël Fischer, present artistic director of the Dutch NTjong, started her career as director under the guidance of Laika, where she made Peer (2001), Villa Fink (2003) as well as the more recent Watou (2011).

Laika performs in the large and the small theatre, and on location: Het gevecht van De Vocht [The battle of De Vocht] (2010) was presented in classrooms, Tot in de woestijn [Into the desert] (2009) in an abandoned car park and Othello in an army tent on a city square. During the biennial BLOK-BLOC city festival, the company presents productions for and with the neighbourhood in and between the apartment buildings on Antwerp’s Left Bank, thus ensuring its appeal to a wide and diverse audience. Laika is also very active internationally and performs a large part of its productions abroad. This has resulted in close ties with among others Le Volcan in Le Havre and Le Channel in Calais.

Starting with the 2014-15 season, Laika together with de Roovers and Muziektheater Transparant are moving to Matterhorn. Matterhorn will be a space where established artists, young talent and newcomers can make their creations. The diversity of the artistic work of the various partners makes possible new cross-fertilisation among the artists. In addition, Laika and Transparant pay extra attention to working with children and youth, with new operas and theatre performances being made by and for a young audience.

www.laika.be
**Luxemburg**

Luxemburg, which makes ‘theatre for children and other inquisitive people’, was established in 1997 by Arlette Van Overvelt. The company’s activities rest on three pillars: Van Overvelt’s own work, the ‘launch platform’ for young makers and the participation project Bij de buren [At the neighbours], in which luxemburg reaches families that do not easily find their way to the theatre.

With stories as starting point, luxemburg searches for cross-fertilisation between text, image and music. To this end, the company works with artists from diverse disciplines. Wind in de wilgen (2012), an adaptation of the story by English author Kenneth Grahame, combines narration, acting, music and projections. And in ik zie ik zie wat jij niet ziet en het is (2013), the starting point is an abstract visual installation by artist Meryem Bayram. This is made accessible to young children using a radio play, theatre and music.

With the launch platform, luxemburg offers starting writers, actors and musicians the opportunity to make their first production for a young audience. Van Overvelt intensively supervises the young makers in the production process and coaches them in their creation. Thus artists are given the opportunity to work in a professional context, and luxemburg is able to attract new ideas and visions to youth theatre. By opting in an initial phase for a limited number of performances with partner Rataplan, luxemburg removes the pressure from the young makers. If this series is well received by all concerned, the production can later tour. Productions created within the launch platform include Stoppeltje (woke up this morning) (2008) by musician and actor Arne Leurentop and De 11 minuten van Mevrouw Olsen (2012), a wordless creation by scenographers Katrijn Baeten and Saskia Louwaard.

Luxemburg makes a point of reaching all children. To this end, the company performs in large and small cultural centres, and in cities, towns and neighbourhoods throughout Flanders. Botst het niet dan klinkt het (2011), a production on living together in the city,
was presented in social housing complexes. With the participation project *Bij de buren [At the neighbours]*, luxemburg aims to introduce underprivileged and immigrant children to theatre. Within the framework of *Bij de buren*, each spring, luxemburg creates two new productions based on a picture book. Each book is adapted into a scenario by a young author. Two actor duos, each directed by Van Overvelt, travel to living rooms in socially and culturally diverse neighbourhoods in Antwerp, where together they read aloud from the book in question and act out the story using their voices, music and costumes. The audience reads along with the picture book on their laps. During the Easter holidays, the living room tour is concluded with a picnic on several Antwerp squares. The picture books are staged once more in a tent. Moreover, *Bij de buren* goes on the road each year to present to disadvantaged children in other cities. The productions with picture books made by luxemburg are also regularly performed during special events such as Youth Book Week and in libraries or community centres.
Martha!tentatief

Martha!tentatief is a theatre company that works on urban themes, resulting in performances (sometimes site-specific) that are highly accessible and often festive. The company makes theatre about today’s world and the times we live in, focussing on the city, where the complexity of the changing world is at its most visible. Although Martha!tentatief’s natural environment is Antwerp, their stories are both recognisable and universal. Their performances are designed to appeal to as diverse and wide an audience as possible. Johan Petit and Bart Van Nuffelen are Martha!tentatief’s artistic leaders.

The company often starts off by thoroughly researching its subject matter. Armed with a pen, a laptop, a camera and recording equipment, it attempts to capture the fragmented and multicoloured urban life in words and images. It regularly brings out productions for children. Onderzeeboot (2009), for example, was a production by the writer and theatre-maker Bart Van Nuffelen, based on the eponymous picture book in which a young boy, Anton, goes in search of adventure and friendship. In 2013, in collaboration with the new Red Star Line Museum and the Royal Ballet Flanders, Martha!tentatief resulted in Dinska Bronska, a dance performance in interaction with an animated film. It tells the timeless story of people abandoning everything and arriving somewhere else, in cities all over the world, hoping for a better life. In this performance, text, dance and projection fuse into a single, organic whole.

www.marthatentatief.be
Randi De Vlieghe trained as a dancer, but since the late nineties has been working in the field of the performing arts for children and young people. So he has been involved in productions by fABULEUS, KOPERGIETERY, BRONKS and Studio ORKA as a choreographer, dancer, theatre-maker and actor. De Vlieghe’s creations frequently mix theatre and dance. Reality and fantasy intermingle in his often-eccentric universes, and humour is also a key part of his work.

In 2011, De Vlieghe set up his own production organisation, Moldavië and, in collaboration with fABULEUS, used it to create the dance performance *Blauwe Storm*. The piece, suitable for anyone from six and over, depicts three childlike characters struggling with authority and breaking free of the structure that has been forced upon them. Michiel De Malsche’s soundscape and rotating wind turbines suggest a breaking storm.

Another striking creation by De Vlieghe, in which he also takes to the stage himself, is *Het verdragen van Versailles* (2008), a musical dance-theatre performance by KOPERGIETERY that grotesquely ridicules the behaviour of those in power. For this work and for *Gender Blender* (2008) – a fABULEUS production about the clichés of masculinity and femininity, danced by sixteen young people – he was awarded the Flemish Culture Prize for Youth Theatre. More recently, De Vlieghe contributed, as both a theatre-maker and an actor, to *Operatie Charlie* (2013) by BRONKS. This is physical spoken theatre for teenagers about engaging with the modern world. For *ZOO doen ze de dingen* (2012), a production by fABULEUS and HETPALEIS aimed at age six and over, he created a playful choreography that conjures up a world of animals, humans and human animals. For fABULEUS, De Vlieghe also coaches professional artists embarking on their first dance and theatre productions.
As a production house, Muziektheater Transparant has been exploring the artistic boundaries of opera and music theatre since 1990. Singing is always at the forefront of its projects. Old and new music, new performances and revivals are programmed simultaneously and are thus also confronted with one another. Transparant cherishes home-grown contemporary theatre-makers and offers them opportunities to develop.

Since 1994, Muziektheater Transparant has been headed by artistic and general director Guy Coolen. He represents the company in various international organisations. Director Wouter Van Looy assists him in developing the company’s artistic policy. He is also responsible for its youth work. Muziektheater Transparant works with several composers such as Wim Henderickx, Jan Van Outryve, Annelies Van Parys, George Alexander van Dam etc. As a theatre company, Muziektheater Transparant focuses on the work of different directors such as Wouter Van Looy, Josse De Pauw, Johan Simons, Paul Koek etc. Nevertheless, young artists are regularly invited to explore music theatre practice or to present their work in the best possible conditions.

Over the last ten years, Muziektheater Transparant has built up a fine tradition of putting on an opera production with selected young people every summer: in the even years a baroque opera under the musical director Nicolas Achten, and in the odd years a broad range of productions with a wide variety of voices and genres under the musical director Liesa Van der Aa.

Transparant regularly collaborates with other companies. Key partners include deSingel, De Munt, Opera Vlaanderen, HETPALEIS and De Zomer van Antwerpen. Travelling performances can also be seen abroad. For these, Transparant collaborates with international structures and festivals.

For over ten years, Muziektheater Transparant has been working with and for children. Together with Zonzo Compagnie, the company
recently created *Listen to the silence* (2012), an interactive concert as an ode to John Cage. The performance toured internationally and won the YAMA Award for the most innovative and creative musical performance for children in 2012 and the YEAH! Award for best European performance of 2013. In 2013, along with Opera Vlaanderen, Transparant made *Queen of the Night*, their own adaptation of Mozart’s *Die Zauberflöte*.

www.transparant.be

**Nat Gras**

Since Nat Gras was founded in 2002, its artistic director *Goele Van Dijck* has been searching for the authentic power of expression in dance. She does this by means of workshops and dance performances, in which the senses always form the starting point, and the dancer/spectator’s experiences play a central role. This enables spectators to be addressed either personally or as a group.

Nat Gras’s target audience is mainly children and young people. The diversity of its performances lies not only in their sources of inspiration, but also in the people with whom it collaborates. In partnership with Jan Martens, it created *Time to play* (2009), a search for the playfulness, vulnerability, humour and cruelty in every child. In 2004, fABULEUS commissioned the company to create *Lilium*, a production with eleven young dancers, some with a physical handicap.

*Sheeptight* (2008) is a poetic performance about bedtime rituals for very young children, and was performed at a number of international festivals. *MuurtjeMuurtje* (2012) responds to children’s curiosity and actively invites spectators to participate. An emphasis on the senses is a key part of *Pommeliere* (2012). This production for children aged three and up appeals to the eyes, the ears and the taste buds. *De Steltenloper* (2014) is a co-production with puppet theatre DE MAAN, based on the eponymous picture book by Mattias De Leeuw, with jazzy music by Frank Vaganée.

www.transparant.be
**Ontroerend Goed**

Ontroerend Goed was founded in 1994 by Alexander Devriendt (now the group’s artistic director), Joeri Smet and David Bauwens. Sophie De Somere joined later. Ontroerend Goed is setting out a path in theatre and performance whose key themes are research into different theatrical forms, the creation of intense and unexpected experiences, and ensuring that the audience remains at the centre of its work. Ontroerend Goed creates both intimate experiential theatre and large-scale productions.

For a number of years now, Ontroerend Goed has also been creating performances with and for young people. In *Once and For All* (2008), a co-production with KOPERGIETERY, director Alexander Devriendt set to work with young people from KOPERGIETERY’s theatre workshops, who show us what it means to be young. The performance was an instant hit both at home and abroad. Or as the New York Times put it: ‘The joyous and miserable chaos of adolescence [is] distilled into a remarkable hour of theater’. The follow-up, *Teenage Riot* (in collaboration with KOPERGIETERY, 2010), was made with some of the same cast and is rather more raw: the performance is all about rebellion and the chaos that reigns in a teenager’s head. This piece also toured all over the world.

*All That is Wrong* (2012), the final part of the triptych, created in collaboration with Laika, is a silent performance about a young adult searching for her place in the world. With a piece of chalk, the eighteen-year-old actress and writer Koba Ryckewaert transforms the black stage set into a huge field of words, thus giving the audience an insight into her thoughts and concerns.

Ontroerend Goed has a well-developed international operation, and often performs its creations in Anglo-Saxon countries. *A History of Everything* (2012), a co-production with the Sydney Theatre Company, was made in Australia with a mixed cast of Flemish and Australian actors.

**Nevski Prospekt**

Nevski Prospekt is the company based around the theatre-makers Gregory Caers, Wim De Winne and Ives Thuwis, which creates performances aimed at a young audience. The collective acts out universal tales, using a highly physical theatrical language that is emphatically geared towards children and young people of all ages.

Nevski Prospekt’s first production was *Hop* (2011), a movement performance based on the myth of Icarus, for anyone aged four and over. The young spectators are provided with pieces of chalk so that they can help to shape the décor. *M van Macbeth* (2012) is a danced interpretation of Shakespeare’s tragedy, aimed at teenagers. In this piece, the war waged by Shakespeare’s murderous general is linked to the inner battle of an adolescent searching for his own personality. *Métro Boulot Dodo*, a wordless performance about the richness of variation that balances between slapstick and dance, will premiere in 2014.

Nevski Prospekt also works at an international level. *Mädchen* (2012) – a musical creation in which, instead of playing with dolls, girls dare to do anything – was co-produced by the Swiss theatre company Sgaramusch, and was performed both at home and abroad. *RUN* (2012) was a new production created by Gregory Caers and Ives Thuwis in Asia, with a group of young people from Korea, Taiwan and Japan. The piece was based on the piece *Rennen*, which they created at KOPERGIETERY in 2008. In 2014, a Scandinavian version is to follow, which will be put together in Oslo.

www.nevkiprospekt.be

www.ontroerendgoed.be
Pantalone

Pantalone creates music theatre for children and their parents, grandparents and carers. The driving force behind the production company is the composer and director Filip Bral. Music, poetry, colour, shape, movement, sensory perception and play are crucial for children’s development. This is why Pantalone unites artists from various disciplines in creations that can assume many shapes, and can be anything from a musical tale, to a visual concept, to an interactive exhibition. There is a particular focus on very young audiences. In Pommeliere (2012), a co-production with Nat Gras, infants are treated to music, dance and an apple for dessert. As well as appealing to the eye and the ear, Pantoffeltrein (2011) also appeals to its audience’s sense of taste, touch and smell: during this performance, children from two years make a musical train journey to the land of the senses with an actor, a dancer and a group of musicians. Other productions include the miniature concert Gelukkig Genoeg (2013); Karussell (2007), a wordless, theatrical sound concert, and Dag Maan (2005), an animated film set to contemporary classical music.

Het b-ooreiland, Pantalone’s production platform for music theatre for a young audience, offers individual artists the space and the framework in which to create performances and to experiment with music, word and images. From time to time, het b-ooreiland also opens its doors for families to attend performances, and for children to engage in guided play and find out about the different aspects of music theatre.

Pantalone attaches great importance to involving children who live in difficult circumstances. In 2013-14, under the title ‘balsemboom’, the company set up a number of projects for children affected by illness, handicap, poverty or trauma. For example, Pantoffeltrein was performed for and adapted to the needs of children with a mental handicap. With Pluis, Filip Bral and Axel Jacobs created an animated film for Japanese orphans from the 2011 earthquake.

www.pantalone.be

Sermoen

Sermoen is the structure around director Simon De Vos, and since 2007 has been creating repertoire theatre and performances based on other existing writings. The company wants to show the complexity of humans and of today’s world, and favours writing that explores man’s twilight zone and depicts his search for meaning. As well as words, images and music often play a key role in its creations.

In 2013, Sermoen presented its first performance for children: for En we stierven nog lang en gelukkig! Simon De Vos adapted the picture book Ballade van de Dood by Koos Meinderts, Harrie Jekkers and Piet Grobler to create a piece for anyone aged eight and over. Using words, games and a soundscape by musician Stijn, Sermoen tells the tale of a king who learns to overcome his fear of death. De Vos regularly creates theatre for a young audience, also for other companies. For example, at HETPALEIS he directed two performances for the over-sixteens: Caligula (2011), based on the work by Albert Camus, and an energetic, contemporary version of Romeo and Juliet (2013), performed by ten young actors. At Kaaiman he created Metamorfosen (2013), a creation with and for young people, based on Ovid’s tales.

www.pantalone.be
Vermaak na Arbeid – Sermoen © Freek Verdonckt

In de wolken – Sprookjes enzo © Eric Stuckman
Studio ORKA

Studio ORKA was founded as design agency in 2004 by Philippe Van de Velde and Martine Decroos. For the 2005 Time Festival, the design duo created the floating theatre installation Watertanden en Zeewolven. A year later followed Lava, een bodemonderzoek, its first theatre performance. Since then, Studio ORKA has been making exhibitions, multimedia installations and location theatre that appeal to both children and adults.

With the help of design elements, Studio ORKA productions create a fanciful world in which everything is possible. The starting point for the designers and actors, who work together closely in creating a story and characters, is always the location. The story is staged using self-made objects, ingenious constructions, text and acting. The audience is involved in the production and is immersed in a different reality. Studio ORKA broaches large and sometimes more difficult themes (exclusion, love, loss), and always seeks a balance between emotion and humour.

The company makes one new production each year. The most recent one is Zoutloos (2014), a production for audiences aged seven and older that is presented in rest homes. Earlier, with Jacobsneus (2013), the collective presented a story of solitude and remembrance that unfolds in the flooded basement of an apartment block propped full with bizarre machinery. In Duikvlucht (2012), the audience – at a remote location on the water where a strange installation has been set up – is introduced to four eccentric characters, and in Warmoes (2010), you are given a guided tour of allotment gardens.

In addition to Van de Velde and Decroos, actors Katrien Pierlet, Dominique Van Malder and Jo Jochems make up the artistic core of Studio ORKA. The collective is supported in each production by a coach and by dramatist Mieke Versyp. The company also works with freelance actors.

Studio ORKA performs abroad regularly and also presents its productions in other languages.

www.studio-orka.be

Sprookjes enzo

Sprookjes enzo was founded in 2006 and is committed to creating theatre for the very youngest audiences. Pietro Chiarenza is the artistic director of the company. The founding members all have a shared past at the Zomer van Antwerpen: Margot De Group, Maya Van Puymbroeck, Sarah Vereycken and Marcello and Pietro Chiarenza – father and son – the final two as artists. After regular visits to Antwerp as guest performers with their circus company Arcipelago Circo-Teatro, things clicked, and the rest is history. It is therefore no surprise that Sprookjes’ theatre creations for children and young people include a generous helping of circus.

Chiarenza senior – who in addition to being a writer, is also an artist and stage designer – wrote a version of the fairy tale Klein Duimpje [Tom Thumb], and his son Pietro directed the piece in its first Dutch-language adaptation (2007). It turned into a site-specific performance for children aged five and up. The story differs from the original Grimm brothers’ fairy tale, and features contemporary fantasy and visions. In other productions, such as De tuin (2008) and Aquarium (2009), the imagination is still the overriding force. Time and time again, a magical universe is created where the world is turned on its head: eggs light up, the clouds reflect the light, fish can fly, jellyfish dance, and lobsters engage in acrobatics. Sprookjes enzo works hard to transform every performance into a stimulating all-round experience. In Sneeuw! (2010), young frogs are immersed in the kingdom of the Winter King, and the Far North makes a brief appearance in the back garden, lending the piece a silent, magical air. Het rode visje (2012) is the story of a journey reminiscent of Finding Nemo, but in this case from the air to the sea. The piece is highly interactive, so that children feel as involved as possible with the story. Another interactive, poetic performance is In de wolken (2013), aimed at infants aged between one and three.

www.sprookjes.be
Tg Schemering

Tg Schemering was founded in 2003 by Eric Vanthillo. The company creates musical and visual performances for an audience that is young or young at heart. Their work centres on familiar emotions and themes presented in imaginative, surprising ways.

A recent Tg Schemering production was Hartekijn (2010), a danced concert for anyone from four years and up, based on the clarinet solo Harlekin by Karlheinz Stockhausen. In his score, Stockhausen not only composed the music, but also set out the accompanying movements that the soloist was to make. This inspired director Eric Vanthillo and choreographer Jo-An Lauwaert to create a wordless performance for a musician and two actresses, in which the music is brought to life in a game reminiscent of commedia dell’arte.

Tg Schemering’s Criss Cross (2006), was a visual music theatre piece for infants, based on the work of jazz pianist and composer Thelonious Monk. Oelewapper (2008) was a storytelling performance about a young man thinking back to his childhood and the bond he once had with his grandfather, with a script by Vanthillo and an abundance of music. Oelewapper was performed in old people’s homes for a mixed audience of senior citizens and children. Tg Schemering’s performances Nopjes en de Reus (2004), Jot (2007) and Mees Beer Eend en Koe (2008) were all based on Klaas Verplancke’s picture books.

http://tgschemering.blogspot.be

T,arsenaal mechelen

T,arsenaal mechelen is a company with a long history, whose current artistic director is the theatre-maker, actor and writer Michael De Cock. t,arsenaal aims to offer a window on the world, and does not shy away from themes such as diversity and life in society. Diversity is not just one of the aspects of its content: the company also often collaborates with artists from different backgrounds. Under the title GEN2020, a practical professionalisation pathway has been created for artists from a range of backgrounds. In addition, t,arsenaal wants to research the classical and contemporary repertoire and re-read it through a contemporary lens. De Cock also regularly enters into dialogue with other companies.

Recently, t,arsenaal has been increasingly focussing on theatre for children and young people. January 2009 saw the premiere of SALUUT! (Droomedaris-Rex in association with t,arsenaal) featuring a text by Michael De Cock about a grandmother who kept shrinking. Michael De Cock also made Rosie en Moussa (2010) and Rosie en Moussa, de brief van papa (2012), two recognisable performances about love, lies and friendship for anyone aged six years and older. The performances are based on the eponymous books by De Cock, which have now been translated into German, Italian, Turkish and Japanese. In 2010, the Brussels Jazz Orchestra and t,arsenaal created Vliegen tot de hemel together with Gerda Dendooven, music theatre with live, on-stage illustrations for children aged eight years or more. In early 2013 Droomedaris-Rex and t,arsenaal cooperated on the production !Waris/Paris?, based on a work by Michael De Cock on the mythical Helen of Troy. Late 2013 saw the premiere of the theatrical concert Amigos, in which a multicoloured group of artists presents an ode to friendship, with stories from all over the world.

www.tarsenaal.be
**Theater Antigone**

Theater Antigone is a Kortrijk-based theatre production company, where Jos Verbiest has been in charge since 1997. He maps out its artistic policy in consultation with Dominique Van Malder, Raven Ruëll and Tom Dupont. With artists from various disciplines, Theater Antigone creates performances in which words always play an important role, and performs both repertory and commissioned pieces.

One of Theater Antigone’s most recent creations is *Lange dagreis naar de nacht* (2013), based on Eugene O’Neill’s play and directed by Peter Monsaert. Previously, Jos Verbiest and Raven Ruëll sketched a confrontational picture of our justice system in *Tribuna(a)l* (2013), a montage of a series of real-life criminal court cases in a reconstructed courtroom. Just like *Baal* (2011), Verbiest and Ruëll’s production of Brecht’s first play, *Tribuna(a)l* is a co-production between Theater Antigone and Brussels’ Théâtre National, performed by a mixed cast of Dutch- and French-speaking actors. In *Tribuna(a)l* the two languages are alternated.

Antigone regularly makes theatre for a young audience. In *Bekdichtzitsstil* (2014), a co-production with the Dutch Theater Artemis, the writers Raven Ruëll and Jan Sobrie present an ode to the wild, playful child, who is often too quickly labelled. *De papa, de mama en de nazi* (2012) is a raw comedy written by Bruno Mistiaen about a boy who decides to become a Nazi when his mother abandons the family; it was co-produced by KOPERGIETERY.

Theater Antigone is a multi-faceted company that also has both a youth arm and a social-artistic arm. For the annual local area project, a non-professional group of actors is assembled with the help of social organisations and schools, or by means of local advertisements. The group then goes on to create a performance under the guidance of professional theatre-makers. A recent local area project was *Don Quichot* (2014), which was directed by Marlies Tack and Michaël Vandewalle.

Children and young people can also attend theatre workshops run by Antigone. The company also creates finished performances with young adults aged between 18 and 25, on subjects that chime with the world in which young people live. For example, *Pier*, a creation by eight young actors and director Jan Sobrie, is the result of Theater Antigone’s 2011 youth activities.

Whilst Theater Antigone does go on tour with its creations, it also has its own building in which to present its performances. Antigone often works with other companies and theatre-makers, and also presents guest performances alongside its own productions and co-productions.

www.antigone.be
Theater De Spiegel

Theater De Spiegel is a company that combines music with many other artistic languages, including the imagery of puppets and objects. Artistic director is Karel Van Ransbeeck. He grew up in ‘Family Theatre’ De Spiegel that was established as puppet theatre in 1965 by his father, Fé Van Ransbeeck. Karel shifted the accent to music theatre and developed a programme focused on children and adults.

In recent years, De Spiegel has concentrated on music theatre for children to three years of age and their supervisors. Actors and musicians play with puppets, space, sound and the audience. Sensory perception plays an important role in the creations. De Spiegel travels with its productions for babies and toddlers not only to cultural centres, but also to schools and nurseries.

For Bramborry (2008), a production for children aged one and older, De Spiegel and Théâtre de la Guimbarde from Charleroi took inspiration from the visual work of Czech artist Květa Pacovská. Three actor/musicians experiment with colourful, geometrically flat puppets and explore the possibilities of their instruments. Caban (2012) is an artistic play area with a number of child-sized architectural constructions. Toddlers explore the huts by looking, feeling and listening to the musicians, who in turn respond to what the children do. The music theatre production Nest (2013) grew out of the interaction between the young visitors to Caban and the musicians. In 2013 Bzzz’T was also presented for the first time, an outdoor production in which plastic puppets, animation and live harp music transport the audience to the world of insects. After the show, the children themselves go on a journey of discovery. Meneer Papier en Don Karton, based on the picture books of Elvis Peeters and Gerda Dendooven, premiered in March 2014.

Together with Musica and Provinciaal Domein Dommelhof, Theater De Spiegel initiated Babelut, a biennial art festival with musical productions and workshops for babies, toddlers and adult supervisors. The first edition of Babelut took place in 2008.

www.despiegel.com
Theater FroeFroe

Theater FroeFroe creates puppet theatre for children, youth and adults. The artistic directors of the company are the brothers Marc and Jan Maillard.

Distinctive to Theater FroeFroe is the use of latex puppets and the choice for multidisciplinarity: the company works with puppets, objects, video, live music, actors and text. The staged stories are frequently based on classics: fairy tales, myths or repertoire. Absurdism and humorous horror are an important part of the productions. The Theater FroeFroe puppets tend to be caricatural, grotesque beings. In addition to large and small theatres, FroeFroe presents its productions on location, in tents and at festivals.

Recent work includes Tropoi (2013) directed by Marc Maillard, a production set in a medieval context on the power of music and inspired by Helmut Krausser’s novel Melodien. 2013 also saw the premiere of Labyrinth. In this partnership with Theater Tieret, the story of Ariadne, Theseus and the Minotaur is linked to that of Icarus to create a totality with puppets, projections and music by the Lili Grace duo. For Repelsteel [Rumpelstiltskin] (2014), FroeFroe based itself on Imme Dros’ adaptation of the familiar fairy tale. Faust (2014), with flamenco and fado music, is presented outdoors.

Home base for Theater FroeFroe is De Vrije Val II, an old warehouse in Antwerp that has been converted into a small theatre with adjacent atelier space for making the company’s own puppets as well as puppets and props for other companies and organisations.

FroeFroe is explicitly committed to the development of puppet theatre. This includes support to young makers. Presently it is frequently co-producing the work of Theater Tieret and Compagnie Frieda. FroeFroe also organises puppet theatre workshops and master classes in its atelier. Apprentices from Belgium and abroad come to study here.

In 2006, Theater FroeFroe received the Flemish Culture Prize for Youth Theatre, an award given by the Flemish government to the best youth theatre company.

www.froefroe.be
Theater Tieret

Theater Tieret is a young, impassioned company that makes puppet and street theatre. Tieret was founded in 2002, with Joost Van den Branden as artistic director.

Tieret is all about powerful, evocative theatre, in terms of both form and content, with a hint of humour and playfulness. The company makes many-layered plays for children and adults, touring mainly in Flanders and the Netherlands.

Theater Tieret makes small, intimate street-theatre performances, such as Baraque Future (2011, in a tent with a maximum of 25 spectators) – and smaller-scale site-specific productions, such as the festival production Barbie-Rama (on tour since 2008) and Reynaert - de Valschaard met den Grijzen Baard (2012) and larger theatre productions.

Tieret also likes to incorporate visual art (as in Het Land van de Grote Woordfabriek, 2012, after the picture book of the same title), and live music into its performances. But puppets, objects and figures always take centre stage, in a hybrid form involving actors. Figure theatre has the power to appeal to the very young, yet here too Tieret continues to make many-layered pieces: Poezewoezework (2010) depicted the everyday multicultural reality, while Rimpelwals (2014) presents such major themes as ‘parting’ and ‘hope’ at the right level for the young audience. For older audiences, Tieret likes to use powerful writing, based for example on Greek mythology, as in Hybris (2007) and Labyrinth (2013), a co-production with FroeFroo. But the strength of the story, the script and the imagination are always at its heart, as in Dwarf, het theater van de kleine man (2011): ‘What you see when you close your eyes really exists … for a moment’.

In addition to productions for theatres, the street and other locations, in recent years Tieret has specialised in offering educationally well-founded workshops on puppet-making and puppetry in education. The company would like to become involved in embedding high-quality figure theatre in education.

www.tieret.be
Tuning People

Tuning People makes visual theatre and sound theatre. Tuning People is a collective, but also a company of individual theatre-makers. Its artistic core consists of Karolien Verlinden (dance), Jef Van gestel (theatre) and Wannes Deneer (sound). Interdisciplinary collaborations often lead to 'Neo-Dadaist' creations. Bricolage and a fascination for objects characterise the company’s work, and the research process is at the heart of their artistic practice.

Utopia (2012), a production by Turning People and d e t h e a t e r m a k e r, is a scenographic concert. Using moving sound objects, quotes and noise, Wannes Deneer conjures up a utopian world as a protest against economic abuses. In Halve mens (2012), Deneer, Verlinden and Van gestel create music theatre about beauty, being different, and shame, with unusual instruments, and dance and text by Jorieke Abbing.

Tuning People also regularly creates performances for a young audience. YVOD/ROBOT (2010) is a musical with robots, for anyone older than ten. In a laboratory, three scientists breathe life into singing machines that have been constructed from discarded materials. In Tape voor kleuters (2011), for which Tuning People worked alongside fABULEUS, a game with sticky tape delivers a montage of surprising images, sounds and movements. Leeghoofd (2013, together with kinderenvandevilla) also explores the potential of everyday objects. dUb (2014) was another collaboration with fABULEUS, in which Karolien Verlinden and Wannes Deneer, along with a cast of fourteen dancers, look at how sounds stimulate our imagination and create expectations.

www.tuningpeople.be
Ultima Thule

Ultima Thule creates puppet theatre for young people and adults. Joris Jozef, who was already performing puppet theatre for infants in the 1980s, is the man behind the company. In 2001, actor, writer, director and musician Wim De Wulf became its artistic director. Since then, Ultima Thule has also been creating performances aimed at an older audience.

Ultima Thule describes its own work as 'storytelling theatre': words always play a central role in the productions. The company presents the small stories of small people set against a backdrop of major stories about major social events. Typical of Ultima Thule is that it makes performances whose content is somewhere on the borderline of what appeals to a youth and an adult audience.

Ultima Thule's puppets, which are often designed and animated by Filip Peeters, usually have a sober, naturalistic appearance. The set is also kept simple. At Ultima Thule, the emphasis is firmly on evocation. Also characteristic of the company is the doubling-up of puppets and actors: actors sometimes manipulate the puppets, then switch to acting out a character, and then move to playing narrator. Dialogues alternate with monologues, and leaps forward in time and space are sometimes made. Ultima Thule also attaches great importance to music.

Following on from the successful Negentienhonderd (2003), Ultima Thule put itself even more firmly on the map with the Gomaartrilogie: a series of three performances, about three periods in the life of the leading character Gomaar. In 2008, the three parts were performed in a marathon, with live music and animation. This was a theatre trip that lasted for just over four hours, and which left the audience overwhelmed. Later came Rostekop (2008), a captivating performance about a boy who in his imagination survives daily bullying. 2010 saw the creation of Oosterlengte, about Ajani and Naomi, who cross paths with Arthur and Louis when they are smuggled into Belgium by people traffickers.

2012 saw the premiere of Troebel Water, directed by Els Trio and written by Wim De Wulf. A tough-as-nails performance about the tragedy and survival instinct of a young boy who moves in a world full of secrets. In the more recent Nerf (2013), a co-production with the Zefiro Torna ensemble for early music and Zomer van Antwerpen, director and actor Sven Ronsijn presents the tale of an elderly couple, with puppets made by Evelyne Meersschaut. LOOP! (2014) is about the influence of a war on the lives of four people, and following on from Door de bomen het bos (2011), is the second youth production for which Ultima Thule is collaborating with HETPALEIS.

Ultima Thule works in De Kazematten, a former carpentry workshop in Ghent that has been transformed into a fully-fledged theatre infrastructure, with a hall that is shared with the children’s production company 4Hoog.

www.ultima-thule.be
**Villanella**

Villanella is a multidisciplinary arts centre for children and young people. After almost twenty years with no fixed abode, the organisation, which is led by **Marc Verstappen** and **Amelie Aernaudts**, moved into the former Studio Herman Teirlinck in Antwerp in 2011 and re-christened the house DE Studio. Villanella is building up operations comprising two key parts: realising artistic creations and events and presenting them to a young audience. In addition, Villanella guides young artists in the creation and presentation of their own projects.

Villanella produces and co-produces theatre for children and young people. The arts centre is therefore interested in a range of theatrical forms, and in crossovers between different arts disciplines. In addition, Villanella organises concerts, exhibitions, literary events and projects, debates, parties and festivals aimed at a young audience. Villanella is not only a production centre, but is also receptive. DE Studio also stages theatre and dance performances by other organisations. Furthermore, Villanella shares DE Studio with the Antwerp-based companies Laika, Theater De Spiegel, Theater Froe Froe and Zonzo Compagnie, who also create performances for children and young people.

One recent co-production between Villanella and LAMPEKAP is *Fresco* (2013), an overwhelming film experience set to music by Mauro Pawlowski. For a few years now, the LAMPEKAP collective has been working under the umbrella of Villanella. Villanella also regularly produces work by Hanneke Pauwe, including *Verboden toegang* (2013), an imaginative textual performance for young adults about the causes of problematic behaviour in young people. *Koppie Koppie* (2012) is a piece for infants by the Brazilian dancer and choreographer Maria Clara Villa-Lobos. In this Villanella production, dance, puppet theatre, animated film and music are linked together to create a playful, funny tale about the cycle of life. With *Spionkop* (2012), an imaginative, visual performance inspired by the films of Hitchcock, Villanella produced compagnie barbarie’s first creation for children. With the production of *Luchtfietsers* (2014), philosophical music theatre about the value of doing nothing, aimed at anyone from six years and up, the arts centre supported the first collaboration between Mira Bertels and Anna Vercammen. The French version of *Two friends* (2011), a co-production with de Roovers, is to premiere in 2015.

In addition, Villanella regularly produces and presents the first work of artists newly active in the visual arts field, as well as that of creative professionals starting out in other fields. This arts centre has also developed a number of formats to guide (very) young, creative talent. Villanova is Villanella’s launch platform for artists under 26. Every year, students, recent graduates and semi-professional young creatives from a range of disciplines develop their own projects within this framework, and are given tailor-made support with content, production and finance. The results are shown to the public during the Villanova festival in August. Villanella offers creative young people aged between thirteen and nineteen a professional platform and coaching during the annual multidisciplinary Kunstbende art competition, which will be on for the 15th time in 2014.

www.villanella.be
WALPURGIS

Since it was founded in 1989, WALPURGIS has specialised in the creation and development of contemporary music theatre, in which singers play a central role, both as theatre-makers and performers. The organisation is an artistic and culturally diverse place, and is both multidisciplinary and polyphonous. Since 1999, its joint founder, soprano Judith Vindevogel, has also been its artistic director. The company regularly commissions new writing and compositions, as well as releasing CDs under the WALPURGIS Records label. deFENIKS, WALPURGIS' laboratory, workshop and rehearsal space, also opens its doors to other artists and companies, and is a place for interaction and cross-fertilisation.

With a strong belief in dialogue, the company does not start out with an absolute notion of what music theatre should be, but makes room for what music theatre can become. Apart from being fundamental to the company’s operations, dialogue is a key theme in many – if not all – of WALPURGIS' projects. The cornerstone of WALPURGIS’ artistic pathway is the ensemble model: a collective of free and individual artists with whom there is regular collaboration over the years. As these artists are not tied to the company, for each new collaboration they bring their diverse artistic experiences with them to the working process. Everyone involved in the creation of productions has an equal voice.

Music theatre should be for both young and old – even for the very young indeed: the operatic fairy tale Prinses Turandot (2011), a co-production with HETPALEIS, was performed by children aged four and up, and toured both at home and abroad for four years. The piece was conceived and directed by Judith Vindevogel. In this performance, the young audiences were introduced to the music of classical composers such as Lully, Mozart Wagner, Bizet and Puccini. There was even an audio book of the performance published by Lannoo.

www.walpurgis.be
ZEVEN / Inne Goris

ZEVEN is the group led by theatre-maker Inne Goris. After a number of years at BRONKS, where she worked with children and young people as a drama tutor, she became involved in Wim Vandekeybus’ *Scratching the Inner Fields* as a dramaturge. 2001 saw the premiere of her own creation, *Zeven*, an interactive sensory stroll in which the visitor was confronted with the dark sides of six fairy tales. Shortly afterwards, Goris set up her own company using that title as its name.

A number of clear themes can be discerned in ZEVEN’s work: Goris always bases her work on a personal need, often uses literary material as her starting point, and does not shy away from the ‘ugly’ sides of human existence. She always goes in search of the ‘empty places’ in a text in order to express them in a number of disciplines (dance, theatre, and visual art). The performances always grow out of improvisations. ZEVEN aims to open up a pathway that is propelled forward by a single word – the verb ZEVEN [to sift]. The company actively seeks out the essence, and the remnants of a greater whole, thus unveiling that which is concealed.

*Drie zusters* (2003), ZEVEN’s first production, is loosely based on Chekhov’s classic play *Three Sisters*. On the basis of a script by Bart Moeyaert, music, sounds and movement, Goris tells the story of three sisters living in a house, alternately silent, hectoring, hitting and biting, in the hope of thus creating an escape route for themselves. The performance won the 1000 Watt Prize for the most impressive production for children and young people in Flanders and the Netherlands. *Pride & Prejudice* (2004) was also nominated for the 1000 Watt Prize. *De dood en het meisje* (2005) was a visual and musical creation about loss, based on a Schubert string quartet, with six teenage girls as actresses. *Droesem* (2007) was a wordless performance for anyone over four years, questioning stereotyping in fairy tales and making dance seem like child’s play. This performance was selected for the 2008 Theatre Festival.
Zonzo Compagnie

Zonzo Compagnie is a production house with an adventurous musical offering for children, with Wouter Van Looy as its artistic director. Zonzo Compagnie organises and programmes OORSMEER – a festival that introduces children to a wide variety of artistic, and predominately contemporary music, by means of performances, concerts and installations – which has been held annually in Ghent since 1995. Since 2010, under the title BIG BANG, the event has also been staged every year at BOZAR in Brussels, as well as at a number of other fixed locations in Europe.

Since 2010, Zonzo Compagnie has also been regularly creating its own music theatre productions. Zonzo Compagnie aims to enable children to discover music and to broaden their musical horizons, and to this end it invites musicians, ensembles and composers to create performances for a young audience. In Zonzo Compagnie’s creations, music always takes centre stage, but the visual aspect is also important. Furthermore, the audience is regularly invited to participate in performances. This encourages greater involvement, and also helps to make more obscure types of music more accessible.

2013 saw the premiere of Mile(s)tones. In this Zonzo Compagnie production, directed by Wouter Van Looy, you are transported to the world of jazz legend Miles Davis by a percussionist, a pianist and a trumpeter. By means of projections, live music and interactions with musicians, children learn about the different musical phases that Miles Davis went through, and about the possibilities of improvised music. Listen to the Silence (2011) is also an interactive performance that immerses the spectator in the world of a twentieth-century composer: together with a pianist and an actor, the young audience discovers the work of John Cage. In 2012, the performance won the international YAMA award for the most innovative and creative musical performance for children, and in 2013 it was awarded the European YEAH! Award for performance of the year. Station (2014) is a Zonzo Compagnie and Braakland/ZheBilding production.
Just as in its forerunner, *Wagon* (2010), Nicolas Rombouts and Joris Caluwaerts play double bass and piano, and toy trains are also used as musical instruments. *Staring girl* (2013), a visual concert inspired by the poems of Tim Burton, was selected for the 2013 Flemish Theatre Festival.

Zonzo Compagnie creates musical productions both for and with children. For each OORSMEER and BIG BANG, an experienced musician and a group of young artists make a creation together. For example, the pianist, singer and composer An Pierlé shared the stage with young acrobats and jugglers from the Ghent-based Circusplaneet during OORSMEER and BIG BANG 2012.

[www.zonzocompagnie.be](http://www.zonzocompagnie.be)
Blanche en Forza – Sofie Palmers en Katrien Pierlet © Annemie Van Hove
ABOUT ‘PERFORMING ARTS FLANDERS’

‘Performing Arts Flanders’ is an initiative of VTI (Flemish Theatre Institute), the Institute for the Performing Arts in Flanders. VTI is the ideal contact point for foreign art professionals in search of information on the performing arts in Flanders. ‘Performing Arts Flanders’ provides tailored information on relevant research, tendencies and trends in the Flemish performing arts sector, up-and-coming names and must-sees … This is done via several channels:

> the website www.performingartsflanders.be
> English language publications
> news flashes about productions, artists and companies in Flanders
> visitor programmes that give foreign professionals the opportunity to become acquainted with the performing arts on location. This is done via meetings with artists and professionals from art organisations, and a detailed programme of showcases/productions, often linked to a conference or symposium.

For more information, contact Marijke de Moor - marijke@vti.be. www.performingartsflanders.be

ABOUT VTI - INSTITUTE FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS IN FLANDERS

As a centre for the performing arts, VTI is an open house with a strong link to both the practice and the decision-making process. As interface organisation between professional practice, policy, education and an interested public, VTI stimulates discussion about performing artists and their work, about cultural policy and performing arts issues, about evolutions and trends in performance land, about international and intercultural works and about the place of art in society.

To this end, VTI today fulfils three core functions that continuously interact with one another: research, documentation and interaction. VTI aims to provide relevant information via an extensive arsenal of instruments that can be flexibly deployed. By presenting facts and facilitating the circulation of expertise, it aims to contribute to the sector’s continuing development and, based on a thoroughgoing knowledge of the past, work on a future-oriented social climate for artistic creation.

Day-to-day business

VTI’s three core tasks are an integral part of its day-to-day business.

Open house

VTI is an open house in the centre of Brussels. We have an extensive library, spread out across two floors. We also provide space to meet and computer workstations. Visitors are welcome to work, meet, browse through the library collection or have a cup of coffee. We are open from Tuesday to Friday, from 10 am to 6 pm.

Collections

Our collections contain a mine of information and can be consulted free of charge. These include:

> documentation on organisations and artists in Flanders
> books on the performing arts, cultural management, policy, art education, etc.
> no less than 7,000 plays, in both published and manuscript form
> 120 professional journals
> cuttings archives of relevant information from newspapers and periodicals
> a video library with over 6,000 hours of tapes

You can search our library catalogue at data.vti.be. The VTI staff is here to help you find the information you need.

Helpdesk

VTI staff also answer specific questions about the performing arts in Belgium and abroad by phone, e-mail or post. Feel free to contact us at info@vti.be.
Websites

The www.performingarts.be website aims to be flexible and to keep pace with current news. The site contains much useful information on the performing arts sector: an overview of the performing arts landscape, profiles of companies, the ins and outs of subsidies, a list of first nights, the latest job vacancies, etc. The website also enables you to keep track of VTI’s work, with a survey of all of its activities and useful documents.

You can find complete information about persons, productions and organisations at data.vti.be. An ingenious search engine enables you to search our library catalogue.

Whoswho.vti.be is a web tool that visualises the networks of artists and organisations.

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About Arts Flanders

Arts Flanders informs art professionals, policy makers and other interested parties concerning the rich arts sector in Flanders. This includes a calendar of important cultural events abroad. To learn more about our Flemish artists abroad, visit the website www.artsflanders.be and register for the monthly newsletter.

www.artsflanders.be

Colophon

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