

# KUNSTEN KUNSTEN PUNT

## Have Love, Will Travel

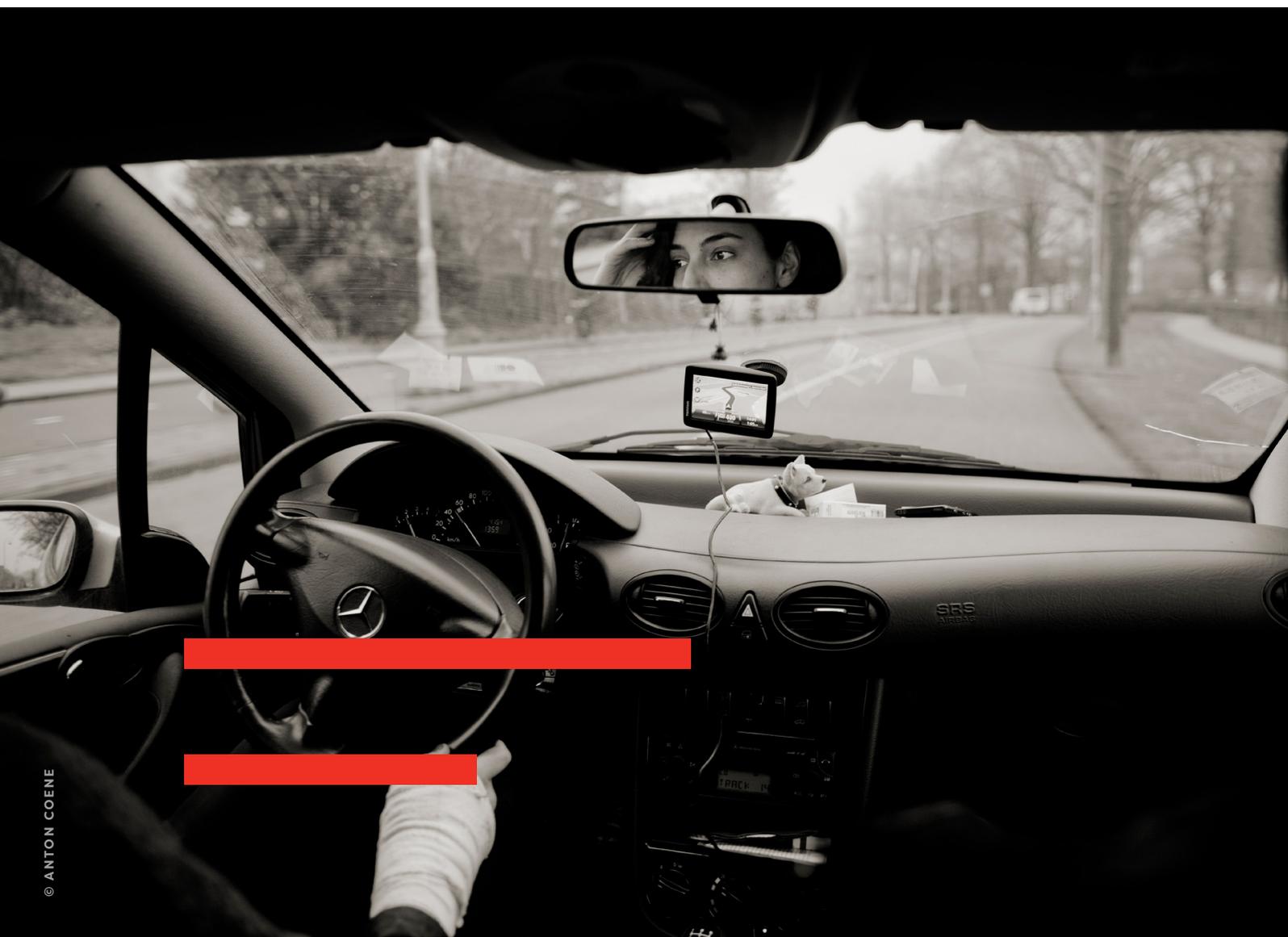
International concerts by Belgian music artists  
(2013-2017)

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# Index

<b>1. Executive summary</b>	<b>03</b>
<b>2. Introduction</b>	<b>04</b>
<b>3. Overview of the concert data</b>	<b>06</b>
<b>4. Distribution per country</b>	<b>08</b>
<b>5. Artists per country</b>	<b>09</b>
<b>6. Distribution per city</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7. Belgian artists abroad</b>	<b>14</b>

# 1. Executive summary

Internationalisation is crucial to the music sector in Flanders and Belgium. And yet significant gaps exist in the knowledge about working internationally in this sector. That is why, in the context of the research project *Reframing the International*, Kunstenpunt/Flanders Arts Institute is presenting a first comprehensive and detailed study of live concerts and DJ sets by Belgian music artists abroad. The focus is on the 2013-2017 period.

By collecting data from various concert websites (Songkick, Bandsintown, Setlist.fm, Facebook Events) and by processing, correcting and completing this information when appropriate, we arrived at a data set of 24,100 international live concerts and DJ sets by 1,378 Belgian artists between 2013 and 2017. The data mainly relates to artists from the genres of pop and rock. The concerts took place in 3,706 different cities in 109 different countries outside Belgium. In 46 of these 109 countries, a Belgian concert was organised in each of the five years under consideration.

Europe is the main market for Belgian concerts: it is where 84 per cent of all the examined performances took place. North and Central America (especially the US and Canada) come in second with a share of 11 per cent. The countries with the most concerts between 2013 and 2017 are the Netherlands (5,147), France (4,851), Germany (3,481), the US (2,177) and the UK (1,933), respectively.

These are also the countries where on average most Belgian artists perform per year. The Netherlands presents the most varied sample of Belgian concerts. It is where we find the highest average of artists per year (336) and different genres are also represented. With France (an average of 263 artists per year), Germany (194), the UK (128) and the US (90), four of the world's five largest music markets are represented. Between 50 and 60 per cent of the Belgian acts that performed in these countries did so in only one of the examined years. The percentage of artists that performed in these countries in four or five of the examined years varies from 12 to 14.

Countries of the Schengen Area stand for 74 per cent of all Belgian concerts. Belgium's neighbouring countries take up a share of 57 per cent. In the BRICS countries, by contrast, only 2 per cent of concerts took place. Asia, South America, Oceania and Africa have a combined share of about 5 per cent. These continents are home to the countries where no Belgian artist performed in the examined period.

Paris is the city with the highest average of concerts per year (243) and the highest average of Belgian musicians per year (143), followed by Amsterdam (an average of 153 concerts per year, an average of 105 artists per year), London (152 and 90), Berlin (123 and 79), Utrecht (61 and 51) and New York (58 and 35). Among the most visited cities, there are mostly Dutch cities (including Breda, Rotterdam and Eindhoven).

Half of the 1,378 Belgian artists under consideration had a maximum of four international concerts between 2013 and 2017. Of the total number of artists, 66 per cent played abroad fewer than ten times during this period, while 24 per cent of Belgian performers are to be found in the category of ten to 49 international concerts and 6 per cent in the category of 50 to 99 international concerts. Three per cent gave more than 100 performances outside Belgium. These three per cent are responsible for more than a third of all the examined concerts between 2013 and 2017. Each category offers a palette of Belgian artists from different genres and with different career trajectories.

Among the Belgian artists who performed the most abroad, it is almost exclusively DJs that played more outside Europe than in Europe. Among the acts that performed in the US in (almost) every year under consideration, we also mostly find DJs. The reason probably lies in the logistical advantage of DJs over live bands (there is generally a single DJ or a duo, with equipment that is easier to set up and transport, and the tour is generally less frequently interrupted by the production of new music).

## 2. Introduction

Several field studies and mission statements about the music sector in Flanders and Belgium put it very clearly: internationalisation is crucial to this sector.<sup>01</sup> This importance is both economic – it potentially offers more performing opportunities and a bigger market than Belgium alone – and artistic – by measuring themselves on an international level, musicians can achieve a higher level of quality.

Despite the crucial role of foreign countries, there are some significant gaps in the knowledge about working internationally in the Flemish and Belgian music sector. The international activities of subsidised music organisations, traceable via activity reports collected by the Culture, Youth and Media Department of the Flemish authorities, featured in several publications in the past.<sup>02</sup> Such overviews are less obvious for artists without public support.

As regards music sales, Ultratop is the organisation that keeps track of the singles and albums charts in Flanders. The [Ultratop](#) website provides a partial view of the successes of Belgian musicians in some foreign charts. However, publicly available statistical studies that offer an overview of Belgian music sales abroad are missing.<sup>03</sup>

Statistics on concerts by Belgian musicians abroad are also lacking. International concert data of Flemish performers used to be collected in the agenda of Arts Flanders, a collaboration between support organisations from the arts and heritage sectors.<sup>04</sup> However, this database provides no data for recent years. Another database that gathers information about international performances by Flemish musicians is this one by [vi.be](#), an initiative of Poppunt. The data in this database comes mainly from up-and-coming young bands for which Poppunt wishes to create performing opportunities.

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01 MuziekOverleg, *Music is Life! Een integrale visie voor de muzieksector*, 2009, p. 6. See also: *Music is Life! Manifest van de muzieksector*, 2009, p. 7; Stef Coninx, 'Internationaal werken in de muzieksector', in: *Joining the Dots*, special issue of *Courant*, no. 96, February-April 2011, pp. 24-30; Philip De Coene et al., *Voorstel van resolutie betreffende een 'Actieplan voor de muziek in Vlaanderen'*, 2011; Muziekcentrum Vlaanderen, *Landschapstekening Muziek*, 2014, pp. 19-22.

02 See, among others: Steven Marx, *Er zit muziek in de subsidies*, 2009, pp. 36-38; Stef Coninx, 'Internationaal werken in de muzieksector', pp. 25-28.

03 A study in which the circulation of the Belgian music repertoire in other European countries is briefly evoked (without mentioning figures) is: Emmanuel Legrand, *Music Crossing Borders. Monitoring the cross-border circulation of European music repertoire within the European Union*, 2012, p. 28.

04 <http://artsflanders.be/>. *Joining the Dots* (2011) presents a prudent analysis of international concerts in 2009 on the basis of a limited set of data from the database of Arts Flanders; see: Stef Coninx, 'Internationaal werken in de muzieksector', pp. 26-27. Data from this database about concerts in 2013 and 2014 were evoked in a blog post from 2016: Nico Kennes, *4 things you didn't know about Flemish musicians on tour*, 2016.

It is not the finality of vi.be to collect data about more established names, which generally do not have a profile on the website.

Yet a lot of information is available online about international concerts by Belgian artists, among which the more established names. Websites such as Songkick and Bandsintown receive concert data from performers around the world, including Belgians. Many also announce their concerts, DJ sets and tours on their own Facebook pages. Flanders Arts Institute decided to collect this scattered information in one data set and to remove overlapping data. In doing so we arrived at a vast and unique data set, which forms the foundation of this quantitative study that fits in *Reframing the International*, a research project of Flanders Arts Institute.<sup>05</sup>

With *Reframing the International*, Flanders Arts Institute is trying to fill in some important gaps in the knowledge about working internationally in the Flemish/Belgian music sector.<sup>06</sup> The ‘import’ of foreign music in Flanders and Brussels was dealt with in a previous statistical study within the research project.<sup>07</sup> The current paper focuses on the ‘export’: how many Belgian music artists performed abroad? How many concerts are we talking about? Where did the performers play the most? Are there significant differences in terms of international distribution between artists and between different genres? Some of these questions were already raised in a series of posts on the blog of *Reframing the International*.<sup>08</sup> The aim of this paper is to provide a descriptive, statistical overview as complete as possible of the international distribution of live concerts and DJ sets by Belgian artists.

The focus of the statistical analysis is on the **period 2013-2017**. The reason for this focus relates to the nature of the data being used. A considerable share of this data comes from [www.songkick.com](http://www.songkick.com) and [www.bandsintown.com](http://www.bandsintown.com). These websites collect data from ticket-sales websites, but also receive data about live concerts and DJ sets from musicians themselves and from other individual users. Both Songkick and Bandsintown were set up in 2007. In the period following their launch, such websites experience a growth in the number of users and, as a result, of the number of registered concerts. After a number of years that growth curve stabilises and for Songkick and Bandsintown, that began in 2013. From that year onward we obtain figures that we can compare with those of the following years. The data from these websites was complemented with data about events on Facebook and with data from [www.setlist.fm](http://www.setlist.fm), a type of online archive for concerts.

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05 The data set with concerts by Belgian music artists is updated regularly. This quantitative study is based on a version from 18 September 2017.

06 Reports of meetings of the European music sector show that there is also a demand for this type of information about the international circulation in other countries; see: *The AB Music Working Group Report. December 2015 – June 2016*, 2016.

07 Simon Leenknecht and Tom Ruetten, *Welke landen zijn trending in de kunsten? Onderzoek naar vermeldingen van het buitenland in het kunstenaarsbod in Vlaanderen en Brussel in 2014*, 2016.

08 Simon Leenknecht, *Belgische bands in het buitenland. Waar speelden ze en hoeveel?*, 2017; Nico Kennes, *Bored in the USA. Belgian bands touring internationally*, 2017; Lobke Aelbrecht, *Beren gieren ook buiten de landsgrenzen. De internationale carrière van een jazzband onder de loep*, 2017. There are also a couple of blog posts on the issue of international breakthroughs; see: Joris Janssens, *Internationaal doorbreken voor dummies (deel 1: ‘volgens het boekje’) and (deel 2: ‘lessen uit de ondergrond’)*, 2017.

Lastly, the collected data set was further enriched with lacking concert figures that Flanders Arts Institute itself tracked down and data that was supplied by managers.<sup>09</sup>

The overall result is a set of data relating to **24,100 live concerts and DJ sets<sup>10</sup> outside Belgium** covering the period running from 1 January 2013 until 31 December 2017. It involves concerts by *Belgian* performers. A difference between Flemish and non-Flemish artists is (as yet) impossible. This means that we have included performers from the French-speaking Community (such as Puggy and Mélanie de Biasio) in the data set. The same holds for musicians that are from Belgium but currently live abroad (such as VRWRK or Mannequins on 7th Street). Foreigners who have lived in Belgium for a long time (such as Daniel Blumenthal and Charlemagne Palestine) have also been included.

It is mainly musicians from the genres of pop and rock that use websites such as Songkick, Bandsintown and Setlist.fm. That is why these genres predominate in the data set we used. Nevertheless, we also have at our disposal concert data of Belgian performers from the jazz, classical music or *variété* sectors, but in lesser quantities.

Ambiguous, incomplete or incorrectly imported names of artists, countries and cities were located and corrected where necessary. Overlapping concert data (a consequence of the combination of different data sources) and cancelled concerts were systematically located and removed.

Despite this rigorous data clean-up, some faulty data remains difficult to locate. For instance, it is not impossible that some concerts by foreign musicians have been wrongly attributed to Belgian namesakes or that a wrong place name has been attributed to a concert by the initial importer. However, this small margin of error does not stand in the way of an analysis of trends in the period 2013-2017.

### 3. Overview of the concert data

**Table 1:** Overview of the number of examined Belgian artists, the number of international concerts that they performed, and the numbers of cities and countries that they visited in doing so (2013-2017)

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Total
Number of artists	606	642	647	750	721	1,378
Number of concerts	4,491	4,594	4,763	5,109	5,143	24,100
Number of cities	1,236	1,329	1,334	1,484	1,499	3,706
Number of countries	63	68	81	78	75	109

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09 Details about (the methodology of) the data collection can be found in: Tom Ruetten, *Grabbing the Data: concerts abroad en Concerten op online platformen: Songkick, Bandsintown, Facebook en setlist.fm*, 2017.

10 The data sources do not make a distinction between live concerts and DJ sets. As result, no distinction will be made in the rest of this study, and both are grouped under the terms 'concerts' or 'performances'.

**Table 1** gives an overview of the examined data per year. The first row gives the numbers of Belgian artists who, according to the data set, performed at least once outside Belgium between 2013 and 2017. Over the five years, this concerns 1,378 different performers. The following rows give the numbers of international concerts that they played and the numbers of cities and countries where these concerts took place. In the years under consideration, there were concerts by Belgian artists in 3,706 different cities in 109 different countries.

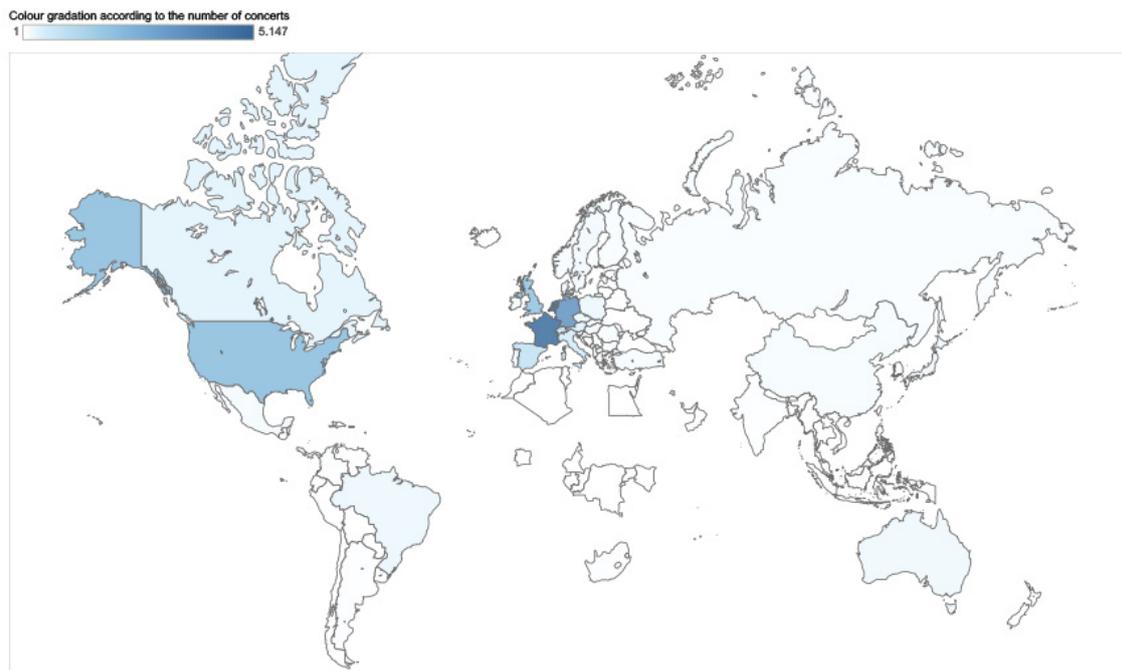
Some prudence is called for in the interpretation of the differences between the figures per year. That 2014 has higher numbers of artists, concerts and cities than 2013 does not necessarily mean that there were actually more performers and concerts in more international cities. Indeed, the figures refer to the numbers of concerts *reported* in the examined online databases and that Flanders Arts Institute itself was able to identify. The higher numbers recorded in 2014 could therefore just as well mean that more musicians began using these online platforms.

Regarding the number of countries, the margin of error is smaller than for the other figures, as a result of which we can pronounce ourselves with greater certainty on increases and declines. So in 2015 we see a clear increase with regard to the previous years (81 different countries as opposed to 68 in 2014 and 63 in 2013). This mainly has to do with Stromae's 2015 world tour, which took in a number of countries where in other years no other Belgian artist appeared (such as Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Rwanda and Guadeloupe).<sup>11</sup> In 2016 and 2017 the numbers of different countries are even higher (78 and 75) than for 2015. But here too there are some exceptional destinations: two concerts in different clubs in Qatar in 2016 and in 2017 (by Lost Frequencies), a concert on Curaçao in 2017 (by Milow), two unrelated concerts in Liechtenstein in 2016 (by We Stood Like Kings) and in 2017 (by Moments), etc. In what countries, then, did concerts take place in large numbers and frequently?

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11 Each region with a unique code according to the ISO-3166 standard for countries and their subregions is here treated as a separate 'country' (and therefore, for instance, also French and British Overseas Territories, the Netherlands Antilles, Kosovo, Hong Kong and Palestine).

**GRAPH 1** All 109 countries where at least one Belgian music artist performed between 2013 and 2017



## 4. Distribution per country

The answer is to be found in **graph 1**: it represents all 109 countries where at least one Belgian music artist performed between 2013 and 2017. Each of these 109 countries has been given a colour depending on the number of concerts by Belgian performers that took place there. The darker blue the country, the more concerts took place there between 2013 and 2017.

The countries coloured white have the fewest concerts (between 1 and 50). These countries are mostly found in Africa, Asia, Central and South America. They include the countries already mentioned (each with fewer than five concerts), but also Iceland (15 concerts), New Zealand (28), India (30), South Africa (34), Colombia (35) and Estonia (43).

Among the light-blue countries we find among others Russia (89 concerts), the other Scandinavian countries (Finland: 74, Norway: 97, Denmark: 121, Sweden: 155), Turkey (114), China (116), Mexico (119), Japan (171) and Luxembourg (179). Among the countries with more than 200 concerts between 2013 and 2017 we find Brazil (223), Australia (194), Canada (327) and especially European countries (Poland: 221, Czech Republic: 224, Austria: 359, Italy: 499).

The map's darkest areas are in Western Europe and the US. These are the countries where the most Belgian bands took to the stage between 2013 and 2017: Switzerland (810 concerts), Spain (852), the UK (1,933), the US (2,177), Germany (3,481), France (4,851) and the Netherlands (5,147).

And then there are the countries where not a single Belgian concert was held and that are missing in graph 1. The blank spaces are located in Africa, the Middle East, Central America and Oceania.

If we look at the countries per continent, then the preponderance of concerts in Europe is striking: 84 per cent of all concerts by Belgian artists between 2013 and 2017 took place here. North and Central America is the second most visited continent, with 11 per cent of all concerts in this period. Asia is good for about 3 per cent, followed by South America (about 1 per cent), Oceania (1 per cent) and Africa (less than 1 per cent). The relations between the continents hardly change over the five years and average these percentages every year.

The countries of the Schengen Area – European countries without any inner border controls, 25 in total excluding Belgium – represent 74 per cent of all Belgian concerts in the examined period. The concerts in neighbouring countries the Netherlands, France, Germany and Luxembourg together form 57 per cent of the total between 2013 and 2017. In both cases there are only small differences between the years.

The large, rising economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa – the BRICS countries – only have a share of 2 per cent of all international concerts between 2013 and 2017. Again there are few differences in the size of this share between the examined years.

A total of 46 of the 109 countries were visited in each of the five years by a Belgian artist, among which the four neighbouring countries and 18 other Schengen countries.

## 5. Artists per country

**Table 2:** Top ten countries where the highest average number of Belgian artists performed (2013-2017)

	Average number of artists per year	Average number of concerts per year
The Netherlands	336	1,029
France	263	970
Germany	194	696
UK	128	387
US	90	435
Switzerland	78	162
Spain	61	170
Italy	44	100
Austria	41	72
Czech Republic	30	45

The previous figures related to the whole period 2013-2017. In **table 2** we focus on the averages per examined year. The first column gives the average number of different Belgian performers that played in every country. We limit ourselves here to the ten countries with the highest figures.

In the Netherlands, an average of 336 Belgian artists performed per year between 2013 and 2017. In other words, this country offers the most varied sample of music from Belgium. It is followed by France (an average of 263 different artists per year), Germany (194 per year), the UK (128 per year) and the US (90 per year), four countries that are among the world's five largest music markets.<sup>12</sup> In Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic, the average numbers of artists per year are lower than 90. With the exception of the UK and the US, the top ten consists of countries from the Schengen Area.<sup>13</sup>

The second column gives the average numbers of concerts per examined year. When we compare the first and second columns, some differences stand out. For instance, more artists performed on average in the UK than in the US, but there is a higher average number of concerts in the US (435 against 387). So in the US a smaller number of Belgian performers was responsible for a larger number of concerts than in the UK.

This has to do with the fact that the US is much further away from Belgium than the UK and is a much larger country. These geographic factors influence travel costs to and in that country. The investment required to travel to North America is much larger than when travelling to countries close to Belgium. To earn back their investment, musicians try to get more out of their trip to the US and more concerts are therefore programmed on average per artist. In addition, not every performer wants to or can raise the investment for a tour in the US. There are other examples where physical distance presumably plays a role. The average number of concerts per year in Canada (65), Brazil (45) and Australia (39) is higher than or as high as in the Czech Republic (45), but the average number of Belgian musicians that performed there is lower (Canada: 26, Australia: 15, Brazil: 14).

Despite the UK's geographic proximity, we observe lower averages of artists and especially of concerts than in Germany, France and the Netherlands. Besides the fact that it is not a Schengen country, another factor may play a role here. Indeed, within the (Belgian) music sector, the UK is known as a market that is difficult to access.<sup>14</sup> Playing or releasing music in the UK has international prestige. To penetrate this market, as a Belgian artist you face competition from both UK and other foreign bands. In addition, concert fees are low. The chances to perform in the UK are therefore scarce and demand a considerable investment that is difficult to recoup. Despite the appeal of the UK market, performance opportunities are often unattractive and that probably has an impact on the figures that we are dealing with here. The data also enables us to say something about the frequency with which Belgian artists appeared in these countries. Some performers played in one of the examined years, while others played there four or five years in a row.

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12 Based on figures from 2016 from the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI) about the total turnover of physical and digital sales and performance rights. For an overview per year, see: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global\\_music\\_industry\\_market\\_share\\_data](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_music_industry_market_share_data).

13 Not every Schengen country is an equally popular destination: Latvia, Liechtenstein, Malta and Iceland each have on average fewer than five Belgian concerts per year.

14 This also came to the fore in the conversations with the music management offices that were conducted on the occasion of the research into the international distribution of Belgian concerts. The difficult access to the UK market is sometimes raised in articles about Belgian music abroad; see, for instance: Benny Debruyne, 'De exportstrategie van Belgische bands', in: *Trends*, 22/12/2011, p. 76; 'Belgische bands in het buitenland', in: *Humo*, 8/1/2013, p. 144.

Between 2013 and 2017, 864 different Belgian artists appeared in the Netherlands. Of these, 423 (49 per cent) did so only in one of the examined years. A total of 118 (14 per cent) performed in four or five of the examined years in the Netherlands. This group of 118 artists is quite varied. It includes Dutch-language music (Dana Winner, K3, Buurman), English-language pop and rock (Admiral Freebee, Gabriel Rios, Wallace Vanborn), jazz (Dans Dans, TaxiWars), metal (Bliksem, Evil Invaders, Saille) and DJs and dance artists (Dr. Lektroluv, Kr!z, Yves Deruyter).

In France 666 Belgian artists appeared in the period 2013-2017. A total of 334 (50 per cent) only played in one of the examined years, while 92 Belgian performers (14 per cent) did so in four or five years. Among those 92 we find French-language music (Axelle Red, Adamo, Arno), but here too diversity is trumps: Aka Moon, Philip Catherine, STUFF. (jazz), Puggy, Girls in Hawaii, The Van Jets (pop/rock), The Magician, Poldoore, 2manydjs (electro), Lorenzo Gatto (classical music), etc.

In Germany also, half of the Belgian artists (270 or 53 per cent of 509) performed in only one of the examined years. A total of 59 (12 per cent) appeared in four or five years. The latter include, strikingly, many EBM acts such as A Split-Second, Front 242 and Vomito Negro, but also dance acts such as Stereo Express, San Soda and Yves De Mey, pop and rock artists such as Intergalactic Lovers, Oscar and the Wolf and Sarah Ferri, or metal and hardcore bands such as Steak Number Eight, Brutus and Nasty. In this group we see performers pop up who played four or five years in succession in France and the Netherlands, such as Aborted, Amenra, Atomic Vulture, Balthazar, Charlotte de Witte, De Beren Gieren, Locked Groove, Milow, Netsky, Oathbreaker, Peter Van Hoesen, Selah Sue and Triggertfinger.

In the UK (194 or 55 per cent of 354) and in the US (142 or 58 per cent of 246) too, a bit more than half of the musicians took to the stage in one examined year. In Switzerland, Spain, Italy, Austria and the Czech Republic (and other countries with relatively many Belgian artists and concerts), this type of performer takes up an even greater share, ranging from 60 to 80 per cent.

Of the 354 Belgian performers in the UK between 2013 and 2017, a total of 42 (12 per cent) played in four or five years. There is an overlap here with the artists who in other countries of the top five played in four or five successive years, with among others 2manydjs, Balthazar, LeFtO, Netsky, Mélanie de Biasio, Lyenn and Peter Van Hoesen. In addition, we also find, for instance, Raketkanon, Mumbai Science, Leng Tch'e and Tcha Limberger.

In the US, the share of Belgian performers that appeared in four or five years is 13 per cent or 33 of the 246. These were mostly DJs and dance artists such as Marco Bailey, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, Kolombo, Eptic, Ganja White Night and Kill Frenzy. Other genres are represented by, for instance, Aborted, Front 242 and Trixie Whitley.<sup>15</sup>

The preponderance of DJs possibly has to do with the distance between the US and Belgium and the related logistical and financial consequences. Indeed, DJ sets involve one or two people with equipment that is relatively easy to transport and set up, which saves on shipping fees and which means that the

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15 Trixie Whitley lives in New York, which helps explain the high frequency of her concerts in the US. There are other examples of musicians of Belgian origin who live in the country where they often perform, such as San Soda and Peter Van Hoesen (both in Germany), or Éric Legnini and Jozef Dumoulin (both in France).

fee for the performance only has to be shared between a limited number of people.<sup>16</sup> The difference in the production of new music between dance DJs (if they make their own music at all) and bands with live instrumentation can also play a role. The equipment needed to make dance allows for a more rapid output of music (especially tracks) than bands that record their music in a studio (often with an eye on an album), as a result of which the time used to produce music does not interrupt the touring (or only in a limited fashion).

## 6. Distribution per city

The Netherlands, France, Germany, the UK and the US also occupy a prominent position when it comes to cities in which the most Belgian artists appeared. **Table 3** sums up the top ten cities with the most concerts. The first column gives the average number of concerts between 2013 and 2017 and the second column gives the average number of Belgian performers that played there in the examined years.

**Table 3:** Top ten of international cities with the highest numbers of concerts by Belgian artists (2013-2017)

	Average number of concerts per year	Average number of artists per year
Paris (France)	243	143
Amsterdam (the Netherlands)	153	105
London (UK)	152	90
Berlin (Germany)	123	79
Utrecht (the Netherlands)	61	51
New York (US)	58	35
Breda (the Netherlands)	56	50
Rotterdam (the Netherlands)	56	48
Hamburg (Germany)	53	40
Eindhoven (the Netherlands)	51	44

Paris occupies the first place with an average of 243 Belgian concerts per year. It is also the city with the highest average number of Belgian artists (143). It is followed by three capitals: Amsterdam (an average of 153 concerts and of 105 artists), London (152 concerts, 90 artists) and Berlin (123 concerts, 79 artists). Utrecht (61 concerts, 51 artists), New York (58 concerts, 35 artists), Breda (56 concerts, 50 artists), Rotterdam (56 concerts, 48 artists), Hamburg (53 concerts, 40 artists) and Eindhoven (51 concerts, 44 artists) complete the top ten.

<sup>16</sup> The cost of travel to the US plays less of a role in the case of Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike, who have a private jet at their disposal and, as the data makes clear, play DJ sets around the world. See also: Sam Feys, 'Dit houden we geen tien jaar meer vol', in: *De Morgen*, 12/9/2016, p. 17.

With Paris there is only one French city in the top ten. The next French city is Lille, at the 11th place. London is the only UK city here. Manchester is the next city in the UK, but only comes in at the 23rd place. The only US city in the top ten is New York. Miami is the next US city, at the 25th place. By contrast, the Netherlands is represented in the top ten by five cities. If we broaden this to the top 20 cities with the most concerts, then Tilburg, Groningen, Nijmegen and The Hague also make the list.

Much of the cultural life of France, the UK and the US is indeed concentrated in, respectively, Paris, London and New York, and as world cities they exert an appeal on musicians from all continents and all genres.

That the top ten (and top 20) consists predominantly of Dutch cities says something about the broad distribution of Belgian concerts in that country. Moreover, the Dutch cities have relatively high average numbers of Belgian artists. Thus the average numbers of concerts in Amsterdam and in London hardly differ from one another (153 compared to 152), but on average a greater variety of performers appears there (105 vs 90). Something similar is observable if we compare Utrecht and New York (61 vs 58 concerts, 51 vs 35 performers). Breda, Rotterdam and Eindhoven also have higher average numbers of Belgian performers than New York. The high averages in Breda and Eindhoven are related to the location of these cities close to the Belgian border. The concert venues in these cities therefore take into account the taste of the potential audience from Belgium.<sup>17</sup>

The diversity of Belgian music transpires not only from the figures. If we look at the underlying data into the artists who play in the Dutch cities, then we see a broad range of genres such as jazz (LABtrio, Bert Joris), classical music (Anima Eterna, Graindelavoix), dance (Lasgo, DJ Coone), *variété* (Belle Perez, Helmut Lotti), rock (Millionaire, Barely Autumn), metal (Marche Funèbre, Ancient Rites), Dutch-language music (Kommil Foo, Bazart), etc.

Berlin and Hamburg are the German cities in the top ten. In the top 20 we also have Cologne and Munich. In terms of distribution across cities, Germany therefore finds itself between the Netherlands, on the one hand, and France, the UK and the US, on the other. Berlin is known for its club culture and is seen as a metropolis for dance music. This is noticeable when we look closely at the concerts in Berlin, where we find more DJ sets and concerts of electronic music than in other foreign cities in the top ten (among others by musicians such as Gratts, Cleveland, Fernando Costantini, Kr!z, Sendai, Hermenez, Stavroz – some of whom reside in Berlin).

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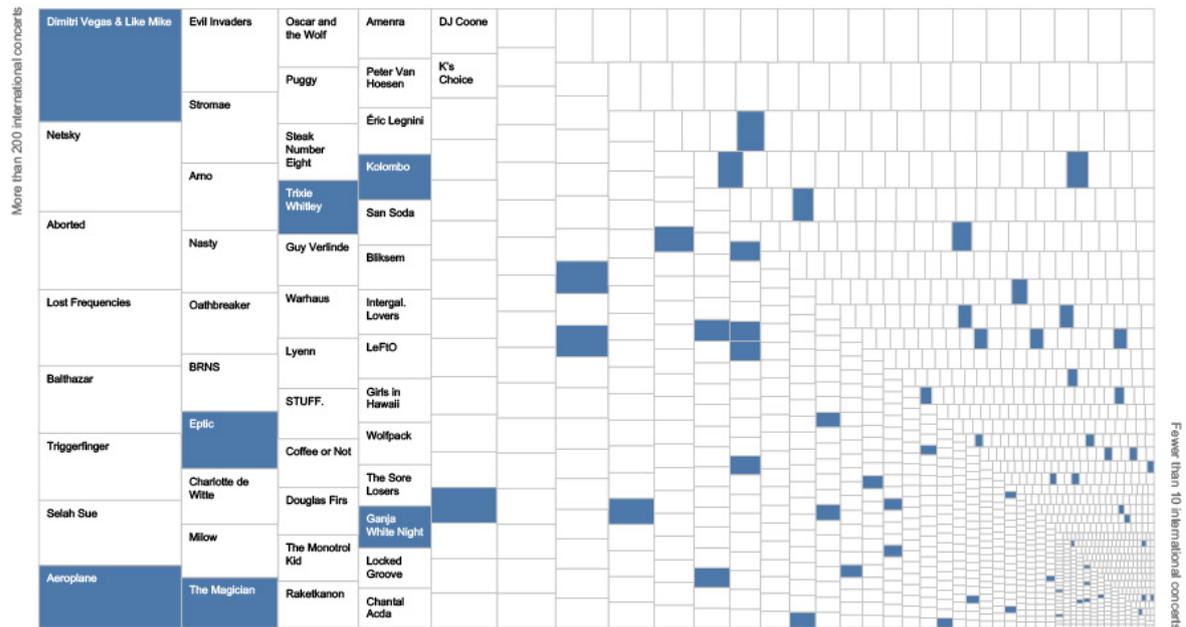
<sup>17</sup> See: Wouter Adriaensen, 'Voor dans naar Vlaanderen, voor muziek naar Nederland', in: *Gazet van Antwerpen*, 11/05/2017, p. 20.

**GRAPH 2** The 1,378 Belgian music artists who performed live concerts and/or DJ sets abroad (2013-2017)

The names of artists are given when the artist has played more than 100 times abroad

Legend:

- Played more outside Europe than in Europe
- Played more inside Europe than outside Europe



## 7. Belgian artists abroad

We count a total of 1,378 different Belgian artists with live concerts and DJ sets<sup>18</sup> abroad between 2013 and 2017. In **graph 2** each of these 1,378 performers is represented by a box. The size and position of each box is determined by the number of international concerts and/or DJ sets of the artist in question. Those with fewer than 10 international concerts are found in the bottom right corner, while those with the highest numbers are found in the top left corner.

The median of the number of international concerts per Belgian artist is 4. We count 916 performers (66 per cent of 1,378) who appeared fewer than ten times outside Belgium. Together they accounted for 2,852 international concerts between 2013 and 2017, about 12 per cent of all the examined concerts (24,100) in that period. This large group includes, among others, musicians who are mainly focused on Flanders (Waar is Ken?, Kapitein Winokio, Fixkes), acts that are at the start of their careers (Tsar B, WWWater, Emma Bale), older acts that only perform occasionally (Evil Superstars, Klinik) or performers who were less active in the examined period (e.g. the Belgo-Australian Gotye, who did a world tour in 2012, but as a result falls outside the scope of this study).

A total of 336 performers (24 per cent) gave between 10 and 49 concerts abroad. They are responsible for 7,186 international concerts (30 per cent) between 2013 and 2017.

<sup>18</sup> As indicated in footnote 10, no distinction is made in this study between live concerts and DJ sets and both are gathered under the term 'concerts' or 'performances'. This needs to be underlined given the significant share of DJ sets in the distribution of Belgian music.

In this category we find musicians that gave most if not all of their concerts in one of the neighbouring countries, such as Het Zesde Metaal, Bazart and Admiral Freebee in the Netherlands, Damso and Jozef Dumoulin in France, and The Juggernauts and Stereo Express in Germany. We also find artists who performed in a lot of different countries, such as Wiegedood, Filterheadz, Julien Libeer, Cocaine Piss and The Priceduifkes. As regards the length of the career of artists in this category, we also find differences, ranging from up-and-coming musicians (Roméo Elvis, Tamino, Témé Tan) to older acts on a reunion tour (Lords of Acid in the US, Technotronic across Europe).

A total of 80 performers (6 per cent) can be placed in the category of 50 to 99 concerts. This group of 80 collectively totalled 5,373 concerts abroad (22 per cent). Besides performers with an extensive geographic distribution (2manydjs,<sup>19</sup> La Chiva Gantiva, Enthroned, Baloji), we also find here performers who focus heavily on a single country (An Pierlé or Axelle Red on France, K3 on the Netherlands, Helmut Lotti on Germany, Tcha Limberger on the UK, Kill Frenzy on the US).

In our data we count 46 Belgian artists who each gave at least 100 international concerts between 2013 and 2017. Together this amounts to 8,689 international concerts. This means that these 3 per cent of all examined performers (46 of 1,378) are responsible for more than a third of all examined concerts (8,689 concerts of 24,100).

Graph 2 gives the names of these 46 artists. Within this group we observe a lot of differences in the number of concerts. While 33 of them (from K's Choice to BRNS) gave between 100 and 199 international concerts (collectively 4,451 concerts or 18 per cent of the total), 13 artists (from Oathbreaker to Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike<sup>20</sup>) played more than 200 times abroad between 2013 and 2017 (collectively 4,238 concerts or 18 per cent of the total).

As in the other categories, the composition of this group of performers who often played abroad is quite diverse. Different genres are represented, among which pop and rock (Intergalactic Lovers, Oscar and the Wolf, Milow, Balthazar), dance (Locked Groove, Ganja White Night, Charlotte de Witte,<sup>21</sup> Lost Frequencies), jazz (Éric Legnini, STUFF.), metal and hardcore (Bliksem,<sup>22</sup> Amenra, Nasty, Aborted). Some among them almost only play DJ sets (LeFtO, Aeroplane, Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike), while others always play live (Girls in Hawaii, Evil Invaders, Triggerfinger) or do a combination of both (Netsky). The cast also ranges from musicians who (sometimes) perform solo (Chantal Acda, Guy Verlinde,<sup>23</sup> Selah Sue) to performers who always take to the stage as a band (Raketkanon, BRNS, Oathbreaker).

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19 2manydjs and Soulwax (also in the category of 50 to 99 international concerts) are here dealt with as two separate acts.

20 Under this name we gathered not only the DJ sets of the duo together, but also those in the name of either Dimitri Vegas or Like Mike separately. We suspect that several of these DJ sets are mistakenly described as solo activity in the examined data, as a result of which it is impossible to check the distinction.

21 Until 2014 Charlotte de Witte used the pseudonym Raving George. The DJ sets under this name were counted along with those under her current alias.

22 Bliksem is no longer active since 2017.

23 This means that concerts with line-ups such as Lightnin' Guy & The Mighty Gators and solo concerts as Guy Verlinde are brought together under a single heading.

If we look at the languages of the concerts, English predominates, with the exception of some musicians who mainly sing in French (Arno, Stromae). Purely Dutch-language acts are not among the performers who appeared most often abroad between 2013 and 2017.

The concerts of these artists are usually distributed over many different countries, with highlights such as Dimitri Vegas & Like Mike (60 different countries), Lost Frequencies (53) and Aborted (39). But we also find performers who appeared very often (more than 70 per cent of their concerts) in the same country, such as Eptic and Ganja White Night in the US, Puggy, Éric Legnini and Arno in France, or The Monotrol Kid in Germany. These are large countries with many concert opportunities and belong, as previously noted, to the world's largest music markets.

The data set we used offers us only a limited view of the international venues where these heavily touring musicians played.<sup>24</sup> A random look at the underlying data reveals, however, that there are strong differences between the venues. In terms of capacity, for instance, there are clubs and arenas where Netsky DJ'd or played live that are larger than the many small German venues and cafés where The Monotrol Kid appeared.

As regards career trajectories, too, we can point out differences between the musicians who appeared most often abroad. A pop singer such as Selah Sue – active since the late 2000s and with several singles in the charts – has had a very different career trajectory than death metal band Aborted – active since 1995 and which has since built up an international reputation in the niche of extreme metal.<sup>25</sup>

In graph 2 we made an additional distinction between the examined performers. If a performer's box is marked in blue, it means that more than half of their international concerts between 2013 and 2017 took place outside Europe. Among them are many DJs (Aeroplane, The Magician, Yves Sifa, Makasi), a fact that ties in with the above observation that DJs can travel more easily than musicians who deliver live shows. Among the performers with 50 or more international concerts, only DJs are marked in blue. The only exception is Trixie Whitley, who lives in New York.

Among the performers marked in blue with fewer than 50 foreign concerts, we find other musicians with a Belgian connection who live abroad, such as Hadise and Youceff Kabal. So here it concerns not only dance DJs but also pop acts (Zap Mama, Sioen), metal bands (Agathocles, Goat Torment), punk and hardcore bands (F.O.D., Stab) or classical performers (Baroque Orchestration X, Yossif Ivanov). Furthermore, there are Belgian artists who appeared rather exceptionally abroad, but did so outside Europe (the Dutch-language Waar is Ken? did a limited number of shows in the US, Flip Kowlier played at the Belgian Beer Weekend in Japan).

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24 Contrary to the names of artists, cities and countries, the names of international venues were not cleaned up for this quantitative study. The quality of these particular data was not good enough to base reliable research results on them in the short term.

25 See also: Nico Kennes, *Bored in the USA*. In a series of [separate case studies](#) Flanders Arts Institute delves deeper in the various trajectories of some Belgian artists who are active internationally.

