

Let me be your guide: chamber music from Flanders & Brussels

A short who's who
of Flemish chamber music
developed in the context of
Chamber Music America 2019

**FLANDERS
ARTS INSTITUTE**

In an essay on early and new music – [published in this small booklet](#) by Flanders Arts Institute – Rudy Tambuyser writes about the rich tradition of chamber music in Flanders. In the excerpt below, Tambuyser mentions a few examples.

“This rich Flemish tradition in chamber music is undoubtedly presented at the highest level by the quintet **Het Collectief**. Also from Brussels, and from its history associated with Het Collectief, is the larger ensemble **Oxalys**, established in Flanders’ rather magical cultural year 1993. In terms of spirit and notes, Oxalys had the French chamber repertoire of the late 19th and early 20th centuries as a starting point, but expanded its range of activity in a sensitive manner.

Still very young as an ensemble, but equally promising, is the **Taurus String Quartet**. Four seasoned chambrists who, after having experienced almost all other repertoires, decided to extensively explore the royal genre of chamber music.

The Goeyvaerts String Trio, with home base in Sint-Niklaas, has charted an impressive course in recent years. It focuses on the large repertoire of mainly the late 20th century. **I Solisti del Vento**, the brainchild of top bassoonist **Francis Pollet**, was originally a woodwind formation that is at home in virtually every style. They have many creations to their name and have been occupied to no small extent with musical theatre in recent years.

Most Flemish woodwinds of any significance once worked with **I Solisti** one way or another. Among them the excellent soloists **Piet Van Bockstal** (see also Ictus, deFilharmonie, and many other ensembles) and clarinetist **Vlad Weverbergh** – founder of the Antwerp ensemble **Terra Nova** and more recently, often in the company of the Prague Collegium 1704. An exception to that rule is **Benjamin Dieltjens**, once a founding member of Het Collectief and one of the most well-rounded musicians in his discipline – he plays baroque on basset horn to avant-garde on modern clarinet, from concertos for orchestral pieces (at deFilharmonie) to chamber music. He forms a duo together with his brother **Thomas Dieltjens**, and is without a doubt one of the most remarkable and respected pianists of his generation.

Having arrived at the pianist front, here we will certainly mention **Julien Libeer**, one of those rare young people that appear to be succeeding in the world of pianos without participating in competitions. He can call himself a protégé of the great Maria João Pires.

A few years older are **Nicolas Callot** and **Lucas Blondeel**, who, incidentally, form the aptly named **Pianoduo Callot-Blondeel**. Both pianists are also fervent accompanists and have been increasingly interested in historic pianos in recent years.

From the same, let's call it Antwerp, vibe comes **Nikolaas Kende**, son of the Hungarian-Belgian doyen **Levente Kende**, and professor at the Antwerp Conservatory. He forms a chamber music duo with the excellent violinist **Jolente De Maeyer**.

With all this emphasis on exponents of the younger generation, we must not forget the more established ones – not seldom the instructors of the former: the already mentioned **Jan Michiels**; **Piet Kuijken**, according to his family tradition above all interested in historic pianos; the international Schumann and Brahms authority and fantastic accompanist **Jozef de Beenhouwer**.

What follows is a short and not-exhaustive list of artists and ensembles in Flanders.

Arco Baleno



(c) Mirjam Devriendt

Founded as a professional chamber music ensemble by students of Flemish conservatories in 1993, Arco Baleno's aim is to scan diverse musical works for common denominators or messages. Typically the group combine a standard repertoire with less known, often even brand new pieces.

Using their experience as members of Patrick Peire's Collegium Instrumentale Brugense, the musicians devote themselves to stylistically faithful renderings of the baroque and classical chamber music repertoire for flute and strings.

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Bel Ayre



(c) Kurt Van der Elst

Bel Ayre means beautiful song. What might seem an understatement at first is what Bel Ayre stands for: music, tastefully chosen from the infinite song repertoire. While the ensemble started as an interpreter of baroque music, it grew to a collective that creates song projects from a more various repertoire. Hidden gems, evergreens, art songs or more traditional airs, ancient songs or younger compositions, all are interpreted with love, knowledge and respect for tradition, yet performed in a way that allows for a contemporary and personal connection.

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Nicolas Callot



Nicolas Callot (°1979) began studying the piano with Heidi Hendrickx and Levente Kende, obtaining his master in 2002. Two years later, he graduated from the Conservatory of Amsterdam under the guidance of the Russian pianist Mila Baslawskaja. He also studied with Elisabeth Leonskaja and Jan Wijn. Besides playing the modern piano Callot also performs on historical instruments. As a lied accompanist he works regularly with Hendrickje Van Kerckhove.

Callot also teaches piano and chamber music at the Fontys Conservatory in Tilburg, the Netherlands, and at de Kunsthumaniora in Antwerp, Belgium. In addition to his playing and teaching, he works as a recording engineer.

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Het Collectief



Het Collectief (c) Emanuel Maes

The chamber music group Het Collectief was founded in 1998 in Brussels. Working consistently from a solid nucleus of five musicians, the group has created an idiosyncratic sound, achieved by the group's mix of strings, wind instruments and piano. For its repertoire, Het Collectief returns to the Second Viennese School, the roots of modernism. Starting from this solid basis, it explores important twentieth century repertoire, including the very latest experimental trends. The group also makes crossovers between contemporary and traditional compositions and with adaptations of early music.

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hetcollectief.be

Crossbones



Crossbones is a professional trombone collective with a great view of classical music and crossover music. Founded in Ghent, part of the Unesco's creative cities of music network, Crossbones likes to bring music to a big and different audience and promote their city as creative city of music.

With this ensemble, Crossbones proves that the trombone is a multi-functional instrument with a diverse repertoire.

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Goeyvaerts String Trio



Goeyvaerts String Trio (c) Hans Morren

The Goeyvaerts String Trio was founded in 1997 by violinist Kristien Roels, violist Kris Matthyssens and cellist Pieter Stas with the sole aim of performing 20th- and 21st-century repertoire. The trio takes its name from the Belgian composer Karel Goeyvaerts, who played an important role in European new music developments. The ensemble plays existing works and actively commissions new compositions for string trio.

The Trio has recorded music by Joseph Jongen, Eugène Yasjé, Louis De Meester, Arnold Schoenberg, Anton Webern, Alfred Schnittke, Sofia Gubaidulina, Alexander Knaifel, Oleg Paiberdin, Giya Kancheli, Arvo Pärt, Ivan Moody, Henryk Gorecki and Nikolai Korndorf.

Contact

Stringtrio.net

I Solisti del Vento



Founded in 1988, the wind players ensemble I Solisti del Vento has developed a diverse repertoire of musical genres and styles. The ensemble's key concepts are: the promotion of great masterworks; historically informed practice; a presence in music theatre and opera; contemporary repertoire, research, creation and experiment; and a commitment to educational activities.

I Solisti del Vento reside in the International Arts Campus deSingel. They play in concert halls and at festivals worldwide. The ensemble has recorded a number of CD's featuring work by, among others, Mozart, Beethoven, Hindemith and Stravinsky, as well as by a number of Flemish composers, including Wim Henderickx and Frederik Neyrinck.

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isolisti.be

Levente Kende



Levente Kende studied in his native city Budapest at the Bartók Konzervatórium and the Liszt Academy, completing them with Maestro Zecchi and at the Conservatory in Moscow with Mezhloemov. Kende has been living in Antwerp since 1974.

Kende has performed extensively in Belgium and abroad under the baton of, among others, Fernand Terby, André Vandernoot, Alexander Rahbari, David Angus, Jos van Immerseel, Daniele Callegari, Antonio Pappano, David Atherton and Enrique Bátiz. In addition to his work as a soloist, Kende forms a piano duo with his spouse Heidi Hendrickx. Together, they are the driving force behind the Pulhof Concerten, a series of chamber music concerts in Antwerp with Belgian and foreign friends-musicians.

Kende teaches chamber music and is assistant piano at the Conservatory of the Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool Antwerpen.

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Nikolaas Kende



(c) Henk Van Rensbergen

Nikolaas Kende studied at the Antwerp conservatory with Heidi Hendrickx and Levente Kende, his parents, and at the Amsterdam conservatory with Jan Wijn. An intense cooperation followed with Elisso Virsaladze at the Hochschule für Musik und Theater München (DE) and at the Scuola di Musica Fiesole (IT). In addition to this, he was taught by pianists such as Dmitri Bashkirov, Aldo Ciccolini, Murray Perahia, Dmitri Alexeev and Radu Lupu.

As a soloist, Kende has played concertos by Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin, Brahms, Tchaikovsky, Poulenc, Ravel, Rachmaninov and Bartók with orchestras such as the Brussels Philharmonic, the Orchestre Royal de Chambre de Wallonie, the Royal Flemish Philharmonic and the Flanders Symphony Orchestra, under the baton of numerous conductors. Kende is also an avid chamber musician. In 2003 he formed a duo with the violinist Jolente De Maeyer and in 2007 he co-founded the Rubens Ensemble.

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Piet Kuijken



Piet Kuijken (°1972) holds Higher Diplomas from the Koninklijk Conservatorium in Brussels, a BAEF Fellowship and a Performer Diploma from Indiana University (US), where he studied with Menahem Pressler. He plays worldwide at festivals and in concert halls. Since 2002, he is professor of piano and pianoforte at the Koninklijk Conservatorium Brussel and he teaches at the Koninklijk Conservatorium in Antwerp and the Orpheus Institute in Ghent.

Together with Naaman Sluchin and Amy Norrington he forms the Talisma Trio and he regularly plays with his father Wieland Kuijken, and with Barthold Kuijken, Albrecht Breuninger, Boyan Vodenitcharov, Oxalys, Roel Dieltiens and Dietrich Henschel. Kuijken's extensive discography includes a vast range of chamber music and solo works by Schumann, Brahms and Mozart.

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Oxalys



The chamber music ensemble Oxalys has been founded in 1993. Its repertoire ranges from Haydn to contemporary music, with a strong focus on the belle époque era (1860-1930). From its inception onwards, having started at the Brussels Conservatory, the ensemble's instrumentation – a string quintet, the flute, the clarinet and the harp – has hardly changed at all.

Oxalys has performed on stages and festivals in Belgium and abroad, including at Concertgebouw Amsterdam (NL), Beethoven Haus (DE), Auditorio Nacional de Música (ES) and Saint Petersburg Philharmonia (RU), and at festivals in Granada (ES), Rheingau and Schleswig-Holstein (DE). The ensemble's discography comprises works by Mozart, Strauss, the French Impressionists and Mahler. The ensemble has collaborated with soloists such as mezzo-soprano Christianne Stotijn, baritone Dietrich Henschel, tenor Christophe Prégardien and soprano Claire Lefilliâtre.

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Francis Pollet



Francis Pollet (c) Artesis Plantijn Hogeschool

Francis Pollet graduates in bassoon and chamber music in Antwerp, obtaining a pedagogical certificate for both disciplines, and a diploma Performing Musician Bassoon in Rotterdam. Pollet took private bassoon lessons with Brian Pollard and orchestral conducting with Frits Celis and Sylveer Van den Broeck. At eighteen, Pollet was a soloist at Vlaamse Opera (today Opera Vlaanderen). In the 1980s, he performed with various orchestras in Flanders and the Netherlands. He also collaborated closely with I Fiamminghi for fifteen years.

During the past few years, Pollet has been working as a freelance bassoon soloist; he teaches bassoon at the Academie voor Muziek, Woord en Dans in Lier, and bassoon and chamber music at the Conservatory in Antwerp. In addition to this, he is artistic and general director of the wind players ensemble I Solisti del Vento.

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ap.be

Taurus String Quartet



Taurus String Quartet was founded in May 2012, making its debut in 2013 with two Janáček quartets at Festival Musiq3 in Flagey, Brussels, broadcast live on Belgian radio. In its first season, the Quartet played a diverse programme at Flanders Festival and Festival de Saintes (FR). In the 2014-2015 season, Taurus performed at concert halls and festivals in Belgium and the Netherlands, France and Ireland. Taurus String Quartet has collaborated with violonist Antje Weithaas and the Artis Quartet Wien (AT), and with the French actor Gérard Dépardieu on Eugène Ysaÿe's 'Harmonies du soir', for string quartet and orchestra.

Taurus has a predilection for the masterpieces from the great classical and romantic quartet repertoire including Beethoven, Schumann, Schubert, Mozart, Haydn and Janáček, but also likes to discover the lesser-known works of George Enescu, Giuseppe Verdi, Ottorino Respighi, Karel Goeyvaerts, Bohuslav Martinů and Mikalojus Konstantinas Čiurlionis.

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Terra Nova Collective



Terra Nova, founded in 2012, is a musical research collective based in Antwerp. The ensemble performs a selection of unknown or forgotten music alongside more familiar works of the western repertoire. Terra Nova plays on historical instruments. The collective has recorded works by De Croes, Tobi and Radoux. Each year, it organises a festival. Terra Nova's members are Vlad Weverbergh, founder, musical director and clarinet player; Anthony Romaniuk, fortepiano; and David Vergauwen, musicologist.

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Utopia



In 1516, Thomas More published his two book work Utopia, in which he criticized the political and economic England of his time. In this masterpiece he searched for solutions for social problems, problems which are now more relevant than ever. Almost five hundred years later, five singers with a soft spot for ancient music have joined their voices and created a new ensemble with the very same name: Utopia.

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WÖR



(c) Mattias De Smet

With their finely textured arrangements WÖR injects new energy into 18th-century melodies from the Flanders region of Belgium. Their music shines an inventive spotlight, with a modern twist, on the melodies in these manuscripts.

They released two albums 'Back to the 1780's' (2015) and 'Sssht' (2017) and toured in Europe, Australia, Canada & the US (including the National Folk Festival, Musikfestspiele Potsdam Sanssouci, Concertgebouw Brugge, Sunfest, Shetland folk festival..). In August 2018 they won the German award 'Preis der Deutschen Schallplattenkritik' with their last album 'Sssht'.

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Saragon



(c) Laura Katarina D'Halleweyn

Saragon is a project of guitarist and ud player Peter Verhelst. The core of this group is a trio with Anneleen Boehme on double bass and voice, and Yves Peeters on percussion. The compositions of Verhelst are initially close to Arabic-Andalusian culture, but there is room for more western harmonies. Improvisations come over these harmonies or over a tonal center, which strengthen the link with the Oriental tradition. Saragon is a musical ode to the beauty of life, the multicultural society and the gifts of this world to each of us.

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