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10 Things to know about

GHENT UNESCO City of Music

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Ghent, A pocket sized metropolis

Ghent is a provincial town in size but it's a world town in its thinking (Jelle Dierickx, artistic director Festival of Flanders)

Ghent is one of the best kept secrets in Europe (Dirk Pauwels, artistic director art centre Victoria)

Ghent is a city of only 230.000 inhabitants with 60.000 students: second city after Antwerp in Flanders with a very lively art scene. The theme of the cultural policy plan 2008-2012 is: *A Nile flows through Ghent* which means Ghent has a very fertile and creative soil and is a melting pot of cultures

The cultural department of the city runs many cultural institutions.

The main city library with 15 smaller libraries, the Archives and Archaeology service, the Monument and Architecture service, a Cultural Centre, the Museum of fine arts (MSK), the Museum of contemporary art (SMAK), the Design Museum, the Museum of industrial archaeology, Art Hall Sint Pietersabbey, the Museum of daily live (Huis van Alijn), the future City Museum (STAM) opening June 2010, the Music Centre Bijloke and the Intercultural centre De Centrale

The private arts scene are 19 music organisations in total among which 8 music stages, classical ensembles, management offices, music education organisations..., 8 theatres, 6 arts centres, and many other bigger and smaller producers.

Fertile and creative soil

Ghent boasts an exceptionally rich and talented pop and rock scene with more than 600 pop and rock bands. The city is the home, place of work and source of inspiration of Soulwax, 2Many DJ's, An Pierlé, Arid, Das Pop, Gabriel Rios and Vive la Fête, to name but a few. Important promoters in the field of pop & rock are Democrazy and Kinky Star

The city of Ghent has a flourishing classical and contemporary music scene where different organisers, (educational) institutions, performers and composers contribute and interact. Spectra, Logos, collegium vocale....

The jazz scene in Ghent is vast. First of all, thanks to its Conservatory, Ghent can offer higher education in jazz. Ghent's many jazz cafés and clubs and the Boombals: Folk dances with 'live' music.

Ghent also has important players in the field of musical theatre, opera and musicals. LOD is an important production and development centre for (contemporary) music theatre and Les Ballets C de la B is the dance company of Alain Platel, who always works with live music on stage. Ghent shares, together with Antwerp one opera in 2 opera houses, the Flemish opera and in an old cinema the Capitole, musicals are produced and presented.

Ghent: City of festivals

Three renowned international festivals: Festival of Flanders, The International Film Festival Ghent (with a special emphasis on music) and Gent Jazz Festival. One of Europe's biggest summer city festivals, the Ghent (City) Festivities, is a longstanding tradition in Ghent. There are also numerous other – smaller – festivals throughout the year, making the city a festival destination. For everyone's taste: from jazz to classical music, pop, rock and techno, music theatre for children, contemporary and classic music and, since this year, a contemporary opera festival.

Ghent Festivities

One of the largest city summer festivals in Europe, which dates back to 1843. For ten days the city surrenders itself to a popular festival in which the city's rich history is evoked and the age-old Ghent dialect is spoken during theatre and music productions and other shows. Ghent Festivities reach more than 1.5 m visitors; among them many tourists.

Year after year the Festivities ensure an enormous *boom* in culture, with concerts in every pub, on every square and even on the rivers. During these ten days Ghent hosts many international festivals: The Gent Jazz festival (jazz), 10 days Off (dance & techno), Puppetsbuskersfestival (puppet- and music theatre), Boomtown (pop and rock) Pole Pole (world music), and Mira Miro (International street performance & theatre).

World soundtrack awards

'The Impact of Music on Film' being the main theme of the International Film Festival of Flanders-Ghent, Ghent has held since 1985 a unique position on the festival scene. It is the only festival in the world focusing on film music and offering a platform to film music composers. In 2001, the festival and several prominent film composers founded the World Soundtrack Academy. Nowadays this academy has more than 250 members, such as top composers Angelo Badalamenti, Elliot Goldenthal and John Williams. Every year the Academy presents/awards the World Soundtrack Awards (WSA), the most important film music prize in the world in the Ghent Music centre Bijloke

The European Festivals Association (EFA) and The Federation of Music Festivals in Flanders (FMiV)

EFA is the umbrella organisation of festivals in Europe, a dynamic network that moved since 2004 from Geneva to Ghent. Service and information, research and knowledge, training and education and cultural policies are the core fields of the organisation.

Flanders enjoys a unique position in the world of festivals with some 252 different music festivals every year. The FMiV serves as the umbrella for and promotes the interests of recognised organisations active in the festival sector. This federation has its headquarters in Ghent, thanks in no small part to the expertise Ghent has acquired in organising the Festival of Flanders, the International Film Festival-Ghent and the Ghent Festivities. Each one of these festivals is at the top of its category.

Infrastructure and heritage

From bandstands, public space to rehearsal rooms over the café circuit to prestigious, centuries old but well preserved and constantly renewing arts centres and concert halls such as the Flemish opera (19th C), Music centre Bijloke (13th C) arts centre Vooruit (early 20th C) Handelsbeurs, Capitole, the intercultural centre De Centrale. The stages and theatres in Ghent boast every genre, from small experimental niche to international famous artists

Education

Ghent offers a wide range of courses and training programmes for professional and amateur musicians. Apart from regular art courses, there are numerous non-formal art courses. To pursue a professional course in music, one can study at the Conservatory, which offers courses in music theory, composition, instruments, singing, instrument making, jazz and popular music (production, instruments and singing) and drama. In the music business the Orpheus Institute and Flanders Operastudio each offer highly specialised postgraduate courses. IPEM, the research institute of the department of musicology at the Ghent University provides a platform for innovation in music research, in particular in fields such as archiving, interactive multimedia, audio/data-mining, music search and retrieval, music and movement, emotions, and neuroscience. IPEM collaborates with many other research centres on an interdisciplinary basis. There are many options for students in secondary art education and Ghent also boasts numerous initiatives related to art and culture education on a non-formal base. The Intercultural Centre de Centrale offers courses on ethnic cultural music.

Stage productions and musical performances

Ghent is the most important city for staging plays and music performances in Flanders with 185 stage productions per 10.000 citizens. This is far above the average of 94 productions per 10.000 citizens for the 13 major cities in Flanders. Music takes up a very prominent position within this sector: In 2007 there were no fewer than 1.803 music events in Ghent.

City composer

Ghent was the first city in Belgium to appoint a city composer in 2004. This honour recently fell to Dick van der Harst (Music theatre LOD), who is the city's second composer after Peter Vermeersch, the leading figure of the contemporary bigband Flat Earth Society.

Ghent's sons (and daughters) on the international scene

- Philippe Herreweghe (conductor Collegium Vocale Gent, Filharmonie Flanders, Orchestre des Champs Elysées, guest conductor Concertgebouworkest Amsterdam, Gewandhausorchester Leipzig and Mahler Chamber Orchestra)
- Rene Jabobs (conductor Staatsoper Berlin, Festival Aix-en-Provence, Theater an der Wien)
- Serge Dorny (former director London Philharmonic Orchestra , Director opéra de Lyon)
- Gerard Mortier (former director La Monnaie Brussels and Opéra de Paris, now Director Opera de Madrid)
- Dirk Brosse conductor for composer John Williams in the star War Films from Spielberg on a worldtour next year
- Gabriel Rios 'Ghostboy' ranked 6th in the World Music Charts Europe and was selected to play showcases at the WOMEX fair in Essen, Germany and the Eurosonic fair in Groningen, The Netherlands.
- Helmut Lotti: singer, shows worldwide
- Soulwax/2many dj's/f*cking Dewaele brothers: gigs worldwide from Roskilde to Thessaloniki, from Londen to Tokyo
- An Pierlé: singer songwriter, European tours

National Geographic Travellers Magazine ranked Ghent third in its global ranking of Authentic Destinations. National Geographic Travellers Magazine is a reference for anyone who enjoys travel, photography and insightful journalism. At the end of November 2008, the magazine published a top 109 of the most authentic destinations worldwide. The historic city centre of Ghent ranked third. And what's more, Ghent is praised for its "brilliant mix of a wonderful past and a contemporary, vibrant city".

Ghent can be proud of the title of highest ranked city, being preceded only by Austria's Wachau Valley and the area around the Rideau Canal in Ontario, Canada. In Ghent's wake are prestigious destinations such as Lyon, York, Dublin, Istanbul, Cape Town, Munich and many others.