

A vibrant, stylized illustration of a winter scene. The background is a soft, hazy blue and white, suggesting a snowy landscape. In the foreground, there's a large, dark tree with colorful, glowing lights. To the left, a Christmas tree is decorated with red and yellow ornaments. In the bottom right, a small, red-roofed house with glowing windows sits on a snow-covered hill. The overall mood is cozy and festive.

# Let it snow



BEE3 is the from students to students magazine of the European School of Brussels III.

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## “ROOT”

KONSTANTINOS SEIRINAKIS

Dull, decayed now and forevermore.

All when I attempt to find the point where nihil ceases to be.

There where there are no cracks in the sky, aether, void;

Devoid of Oxygen and Vitriol.

Wandering within the hollowed nest wherever could a reward, on not eternally blazing, be.

When “everything” has reached its conclusion, the Dark Hour will still not be deceased.



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## "Let it snow – a holiday issue?"

Finally, the holiday season has arrived! Who else can agree with me that the holiday season is the best time of the year? The decorations, the music, the excitement, advent calendars, the cold weather, warm boots and fluffy ear muffs. Sipping warm tea or hot cocoa at home while it rains outside (maybe even snows, if we're lucky). People walking around in ugly Christmas sweaters and cinnamon-like smells at home. Sweet cookies, stored well away so no one can secretly eat them. It's wonderful!

But not everything is holly jolly during this time of the year. As the days get darker, it can be hard keeping a good mood. Waking up in the dark, going home in the dark. And on most days the sun doesn't even come out between the clouds. And then on top of the dark season there are plenty of tests and exams to study for. However, some things can make the dark season and the grey weather somewhat more bearable. For example holiday light decorations. They always give me a feeling of coziness during the dark and cold season. Not only the ones on my street but also the ones I've noticed at school, for example above the bridge to the canteen. Every morning when I walk into school, I now take a different path just to walk underneath the decorations. Do you enjoy them as much as I do? Holiday lights are not the only thing that can bring us joy during the dark season. There are

plenty of traditions and customs that provide an opportunity to celebrate with loved ones, enjoy good food and to have fun. You will read about some of them in this issue, for example in the article "Christmas Traditions around the world" on p.8 .... Do you know about Croatian or Estonian traditions?

If you are wondering whether all of these celebrations take their toll on our environment and what you can do about it, you may be interested to continue reading on p.20 about the environmental impact of Christmas. And before you stock up on cosmetics to offer, you may want to read about the commercialization of Christmas (p.6).

This issue is, however, not only about the holidays. The preparations for next year's Spring Fest have started. On p.24 you will find the yearly Big Boss interview. Or are you maybe someone enjoying scary movies? Or not enjoying them at all and wondering why your friends love them? Then flip the pages to p.17

Whatever tradition you will follow this holiday season, whether you will be celebrating Christmas, Hanukkah or simply enjoying a good time with family and friends, I wish you a wonderful time and a happy New Year!

And, of course, I wish you fun reading this issue!

Charlotte Wiemann

Editor in Chief

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# Noël 1916

“Jules ! Jules ! Réveille-toi ! Papa a écrit !”

JOHANNA GASPAR

Aujourd’hui, lundi 25 décembre 1916, on vient de recevoir une lettre de mon père, probablement en train de se battre quelque part, dans le froid mordant et la neige glacée. Cela m’y fait penser, y a-t-il seulement de la neige là-bas ? Le feu ne la fait-il pas fondre, les traces de pas disparaître et les corps sans vie qui tombent les uns après les autres ne la colorent-ils pas d’un rouge sombre et funèbre ? Mon père me manque. Il y a exactement trois années, en 1913, lorsque je m’étais levé à Noël et avais dévalé l’escalier, excité que j’étais par cette journée, par cette neige et par cette bonne humeur qui semblait régner partout, la première chose que je fis était très exactement me jeter dans les bras tendus de papa. Je me souviens avec une précision choquante de comment il m’avait soulevé, avec cette légèreté qui lui était familière, de comment il m’avait fait tourner autour de lui et de comment, lorsqu’il me posa à terre, il me dévora d’un regard qui semblait ne rien voir d’autre que moi, d’un regard qui ne pouvait venir que d’un père à son fils. Et me voici maintenant, 13 ans, qui descend les marches avec une lenteur monotone que même la nouvelle de la lettre qui vient d’arriver ne parvient à bouleverser.

J’arrive dans le salon, que je traverse en accélérant le pas : il renferme trop de souvenirs et j’en suis tristement venu à le détester. Chacun de ses recoins dissimule une lame qui ne cesse de transpercer le couvercle de souvenirs tortueux qui m’est par la suite bien difficile à refermer.

Je déboule dans la salle à manger au bout de quelques secondes et j’y vois ma sœur sautiller de joie, tenant dans sa main une enveloppe où je reconnais du premier coup d’œil l’écriture de mon père. Cette vision me réchauffe de la tête aux pieds. Cela faisait bientôt un mois qu’on ne recevait plus rien de sa part. Au moins, à la vue de ces lettres écrites soigneusement et empreintes de l’espoir insensé d’une réunion insensée, je sens un nœud se défaire dans mon ventre : mon père

est vivant et, honnêtement, c’est tout ce qui compte pour moi en ce moment.

“Bon, maintenant que Jules est là, tu peux ouvrir la lettre, ma chérie.”

La voix veloutée de ma mère retentit, empreinte d’un accent calme et joyeux qui contraste avec les cernes que je vois s’agrandir au fil des jours sous ses yeux. Ma mère ne dort plus. Je l’entends pleurer le soir, prier avec une ferveur qui n’a d’autre source que le désespoir et souvent je l’aperçois, immobile quelque part, le regard dans le vague, et le visage au bord des larmes. J’observe aussi des cheveux blancs qui n’étaient pas là auparavant se frayer un chemin dans sa magnifique chevelure noire de jais, seul trait qu’elle ait conservé d’une jeunesse aujourd’hui lointaine. Je la vois sombrer en sachant que la seule chose que je puisse faire, c’est espérer le retour de papa. Je ne peux rien faire pour elle car je sais bien que jamais elle ne s’ouvrira à moi, jamais elle ne mettra cet énorme poids sur mes épaules : elle tient à ce que je puisse jouir d’une enfance aussi normale que possible, mais elle ne se rend pas compte que jamais je n’aurais cette chance et que quoi qu’elle fasse, elle ne parviendra pas à changer cela.

“Jules ! Jules ! Lis-nous la lettre, je sais pas encore lire moi !”

Je prends machinalement ce papier si

précieux de la main de ma sœur tandis que celle-ci s’installe confortablement sur les genoux de maman. Je le déplie et comme à lire :

“Bonjour ou bonsoir, je ne sais pas lequel conviendra le mieux, aussi je vous laisse le choix.

Et parce que je ne sais pas non plus quand cette lettre vous parviendra, je vous souhaite aussi un joyeux Noël. Oui, je sais. Vous me direz : mais non, en quoi ce Noël serait-il joyeux ? Et vous auriez raison. Cependant, je ne veux pas vous savoir tristes. Je ne suis pas là, c’est un fait. Mais je veux que vous soyez heureux, et si cela ne vous fait pas changer d’avis, je vous demanderai d’être heureux à ma place car vous le méritez. Si je le pouvais, je rentrerais et passerais cette période mémorable avec vous, mais je ne le peux, malheureusement. Aussi, profitez-en autant que vous le pouvez et oubliez-moi pour ce petit bout de temps. Marie, j’ai reçu et mangé tes biscuits : ils étaient délicieux. Jules, j’ai lu ta lettre et je suis fier de toi. Tu me manques énormément aussi, comme vous tous. Et Lucienne, sache qu’il ne se passe pas un jour sans que je ne pense à toi. J’espère que tu vas bien et que tout le monde se porte bien. Je dois vous laisser maintenant, le devoir m’appelle. Je vous embrasse tous et n’oubliez pas que je vous aime énormément, chacun d’entre vous, quoi qu’il arrive.



Louis.”

Silence.

“C’est tout ?”

La question de ma sœur est valide : cette lettre, par rapport à celles qui l’ont précédée, est relativement courte. Je retourne la feuille et jette un coup d’œil dans l’enveloppe pour m’assurer que rien n’a échappé à ma vigilance avant de répondre d’un hochement de la tête. Marie me fixe un instant avec des yeux grands ouverts, puis saute à terre et déclare qu’elle va monter faire un cadeau à papa. Je la suis du regard tandis qu’elle disparaît à l’étage et m’assoit en soupirant.

“Les biscuits... Ils devaient être périmés quand le colis lui est parvenu ; pourtant, je suis sûre qu’il les a mangés.”

Ma mère me sourit mélancoliquement. Elle n’est pas ici. Je la vois remonter le temps, se réfugier dans des souvenirs de temps meilleurs.

Quant à moi, je caresse le papier, pensif. Je vois ici là quelques petits creux, larmes éparses sur cette feuille à moitié vide, qui, à elles seules, disent plus que toutes les lettres au monde réunies. Dans ces gouttes d’eau salée qui avaient laissé une marque étonnamment nette sur la feuille, je lis de la douleur et du soulagement, de la colère et de la joie, du désespoir et de l’espoir : en un mot comme en cent, je lis un quotidien d’émotions poignantes où tout se mélange jusqu’à former un brouillard indiscernable et tellement obscur qu’on essaye de le refouler, par peur, au plus profond de soi sans, néanmoins, pouvoir y parvenir. Car au centre de ce brouillard, il y a la mort. La mort souriante, la mort calme, la mort sûre. Incontournable, elle rappelle toujours l’attention sur elle et jamais elle ne se laisse oublier. Le jour, la mort ; la nuit, la mort. Au front, elle peut survenir n’importe où, n’importe quand. Personne n’est à l’abri. Personne. Pas même papa.

La nouvelle de cette lettre m’avait soulagé, sa vue m’avait réconforté mais son contenu n’avait fait que réveiller en moi une terre endormie, une peur que je n’avais plus ressentie si profondément depuis des semaines. J’ai l’étrange pressentiment que mon père est mort et tandis que je me débats avec cette pensée obscure, une question cruciale résonne sans cesse dans ma tête : mon père vit-il seulement encore ou est-il, comme chaque fibre de mon corps semble me le dire, mort ?



# THIS IS THE SEASON... TO SPEND MONEY

**Isn't the holiday season a wonderful time? Your body thinks that too. Serotonin and dopamine levels spike during Christmas.**

EMA KONJEVOD / ILLUSTRATION  
EMA KONJEVOD

No wonder, since most people, especially younger people, who are rarely caught up in the holiday-preparation-stress, associate it with positive things, like food we love, our family and friends, but, most importantly, gifts. But what do all these lovely associations have to do with commercialization? Well, let us dig deeper into the decision-making going on in the buyer's mind, looking at a product.

Our Brain has three selves. Our outer brain, the rational self. Our middle brain, our emotional self. And our inner brain, the reptilian brain. That is the instinctual self. Our instinctual self is also the part of us that executes the actions we think of as "automatic". It makes us breathe, tells us that we need to eat or drink, but apart from those functions, it is not deeply intellectual. For big corporations, this stupidity is a golden virtue. The more "stupid" (aka, prone to listen to their reptilian part) and less rational a person is, the easier it is to convince them they need a product. We all have that instinctual self, and we are mostly able to control it. However, it just needs to be tickled in the right spot - and once it is, it is difficult to resist its urge. Of the three parts, the reptilian brain has by far the most impact on the outcome of our decisions to buy something or not.

So, how do companies use this to their advantage? Well, the reptilian brain has two important characteristics: it's self-centered and very emotional. Two things that are very present in Christmas ads. They give you ideas of things you might want for Christmas, and they create that wonderful Christmas feeling we all love. While researching this topic I stumbled across a heartwarming Mercedes Benz commercial about a boy having a date at the cinema while a snowstorm raged outside, but his dad saved the day by driving him in a Mercedes. The girl came late but did come thanks to - wait for it - her father driving a Mercedes. I suppose they wanted to show that their cars drive perfectly in any conditions, but mostly I just saw a cute little story in which Mercedes Benz was the hero (because their cars are apparently amazing?). It made me want to buy one, and I am nowhere near obtaining a license. So (unless you are the Grinch) they are easily able to pique your interest. But that is not exclusive to the holiday season, is it? Let us dig even deeper into why Christmas is the most wonderful time of the year to sell your products.

Studies show that about 90% of the first impression of a product is created by color. Which holiday has eye-catching royal-looking colors? If you said Christmas, congratulations. Red represents warmth and love, dark green, often a Christmas color represents peace, rest, and security, while gold represents wealth, success, quality, and advancement. These colors are nearly always used in Christmas commercials simply because we associate them with positive feelings, but colors also play an important role in brand recognition. Let's take for an example Barbie-pink and Coca-cola-red, two normal colors, suddenly associated with two brands.

On the topic of colors and Cola. Let's talk about the most ingenious Christmas marketing strategy ever. Santa Claus. In most parts of the world, you



can't think about Christmas without sparing at least one thought on our beloved Santa. Now, I'm not going to argue whether Santa Claus is real, but I must say, the number of Coca-Cola commercials starring St. Nick are way more than I could count on my fingers and toes combined. You may mock, but I've slowly started associating him with Coca-Cola. The most ridiculous thing is that for the life of me I can't find a connection between Cola and Christmas, yet every year they go berserk with Christmas advertisements. The average person sees 3500 ads a day, and I bet, during Christmas, at least 100 are for Coca-Cola. It's safe to say, Santa plays a major role in the "Christmas-Economy", simply because kids adore him and he's simply iconic.

So, slowly companies started noticing that Christmas is a great time to sell their products. Now, the only problem was, during the late 1920s and early 1930s, when Christmas ads became increasingly more popular and common, many people decorated their homes only on the last advent Sunday and took their trees down on the 6th of January, so the holiday season only lasted about two weeks. But, of course, after some time companies started getting greedy. They were asking themselves: Why can't this period last longer? Why are only Christians celebrating? Times changed and now surveys show that about 14% put their trees up in early November, 18% in late November and the majority - 55% in the first

week of December, leaving only 13% that put their trees up in late December. The most popular day for taking trees down still is the 6th of January, but now, the average Brit keeps his tree up for 37 days. And a survey a couple of years ago showed that in the U.S. 87% of religiously unaffiliated Americans (atheists, agnostics, etc.), 76% of Asian-American Buddhists, 73% of Hindus and 32% of U.S. Jews celebrate Christmas, so it definitely isn't an exclusively religious holiday anymore. Great news! This makes the consumer' market so much larger and could help corporations earn even more money than ever before!

With the exception of 2020, the most chaotic year of our lives, for the past seven years, the average sum of money spent during the holiday season has been constantly rising or staying the same, but never falling. With it being around \$1000 in 2015 and the predictions for 2023 being around \$1550. Of course, some of that is connected to inflation, but for example, in 2022 online sales rose by 7.4% and in store sales by 6.6% during

December, so it's safe to say that a significant amount of money gets into companies' pockets during the jolly season.

But, all this time, we've only been talking about physical products. Let's not forget that Christmas movies and music exist. Don't you just love listening to Mariah Carey's "All I Want For Christmas"? Well, I'm sure she's quite grateful that we all love it so much, considering in 2021 she's made about 60 million dollars from the song alone and keeps making about 3 million dollars every year. Concerning Christmas movies, the highest grossing one is "The Grinch" (2018) grossing \$526.760.632 worldwide and "Home Alone" (1990) following with \$476.684.675.

Faced with this information, we can safely conclude that Christmas, once a religious Christian holiday, celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, is now a big not-so-religious holiday bringing people of any religions, ethnicities and nations together. I think that while it is nice that the holiday is so inclusive nowadays,

it has sadly become massively consumeristic. One of the problems stemming from excessive amounts of shopping is that many products nowadays such (as Christmas ornaments, decoration and sweaters) still have child labor or unethical conditions involved in production. Workers' rights are completely overlooked and ignored. This is not a problem connected only to Christmas, yet an important issue very well worth mentioning. Another unpleasant truth: with gifting and big feasts organized on Christmas comes more and more waste. During the holiday season, the average household produces 115kg of waste (about the weight of a professional basketball player), 8.83kg of that being food, 3.07kg of clothes, 38 Christmas cards and 3.2 sq m of wrapping paper.

Let's ask ourselves a question: is it truly impossible to have a good, a great, a wonderful time rocking around the Christmas tree without spending short of 2000 euros?



# Christmas around the world

# (well, the EU anyway)

Christmas is a celebration that connects the whole world. Yet every country has its own traditions. How is Christmas celebrated in the far and not so far corners of the EU?

CLARA SCHMITZ

## Estonia

Christmas is called "Jõulud" in Estonia. The Estonian name for Christmas comes from the term "Yule" and is widespread in northern European countries. Yule is part of the Christmas season, a festive and happy time in Estonia. Originally, it comes from paganism and was already celebrated before the Christian Christmas in honor of the god Odin from Norse mythology. Over time, the festivals eventually merged together.

In Estonia, we have few traditions. One of these consists of the 'Päkapikud' (very small elves), who come regularly from the end of November to the end of December to secretly observe children's behaviour. They bring small presents with them to delicately hide in your shoes, which are placed on your window ledge on Saturday nights. On one occasion, they might bring a big present, such as an advent calendar. Otherwise, they'll gift you some well-deserved sweet treats! Beware, these must not be taken for granted, as, if you've been behaving badly, you will be punished by receiving a mere onion.

A second part of the Yule rituals is to clean the whole apartment (or house) before St. Tomas' day, the 21st of December, a date not to miss for fear of having an unlucky year...



The children are visited on Christmas Eve by "jõuluvana", (old Santa Claus), and must sing songs or recite poems before receiving the presents. Christmas dinner usually consists of pork with sauerkraut, baked potatoes, white sausage and black pudding, potato salad with beetroot and pâté - a very complete and filling menu! For those who are still hungry, gingerbread and marzipan can be savoured as dessert. Beer and mulled wine are usually offered as drinks. On Christmas night, the souls of dead relatives are believed to come into the house to eat leftovers from the meal. Therefore, there is no need to clean up after the big Christmas meal: you can just leave the meal leftovers and dirty dishes at the table overnight and enjoy the rest of the evening.



Like in Germany, Christmas markets are also very important in Estonia, the most famous of which is in Tallinn, where a fairytale Christmas market is held every year on the Town Hall Square. In the heart of the Christmas market is the most famous Christmas tree in Estonia. A legend tells that it was the first Christmas tree in Europe as it dates back to 1441; what a fairytale!

MAZAL STIEBER

## Autriche

Savez-vous que la boule à neige a été inventée en Autriche ? La famille Perzy fait tourner la manufacture viennoise dans laquelle la première Schneekugel est née depuis désormais quatre générations. A l'origine, la neige artificielle, virevoltant dans la boule, était en fait de la semoule ! Désormais, la

boule à neige est incontournable dans les boutiques et sur les marchés de Noël. Tiens, en parlant de ça... impossible de fêter Noël en Autriche sans faire un tour sur un des nombreux marchés de Noël. Sur la place de l'Hôtel de Ville, au Palais du Belvédère ou encore devant le château de Schönbrunn, rien qu'à Vienne, le choix est grand ! Parmi ceux de la capitale, celui du Rathaus (l'Hôtel de Ville) a ma préférence pour sa grande patinoire et son histoire (il existe quand même depuis plus d'un demi-siècle !).

Et puis, on ne peut pas parler de traditions sans s'arrêter un instant sur la nourriture : en Autriche, ce sont les Linzer Augen (des biscuits aux formes diverses, le plus souvent garnis de confiture d'abricot) et les Vanillekipferl (des petits sablés à l'amande et à la vanille en forme de croissants) qui sont mis à l'honneur durant la période de Noël. D'ailleurs, un autre classique comestible de Noël se trouve égale-

ment sur les marchés : Le Glühwein (vin chaud aux épices) se boit après un tour dans le froid de l'hiver parmi les échoppes des marchés de Noël. Les épices varient : cannelle, muscade, gingembre et, bien sûr, des agrumes... Une petite gorgée et vous êtes repartis pour une heure de plus sous la neige !

Mais en Autriche, on ne fête pas seulement le jour de Noël : le 4 décembre est célébrée la Sainte-Barbara. Les familles disposent, dans un vase rempli d'eau, des rameaux d'arbres fruitiers tels que le cerisier ou le pommier ; si les branches sont en fleur le soir du réveillon, c'est un signe de chance et de bonheur pour l'année à venir !

Pour finir sur une touche de lumière, une dernière coutume dans les familles autrichiennes est celle de la couronne de l'Avent. Chaque dimanche du mois de

décembre, une bougie est allumée et ajoutée à une couronne en sapin. Ce rituel aide les enfants à patienter jusqu'à Noël !

**EMA KONJEVOD**

**Croatia**

In Croatia, on Christmas Eve, people commonly eat codfish. It is prepared in a sauce with potatoes, garlic and parsley. The fish first has to be dried, then it is soaked and cooked. While it's a very tasty dish, the smell of it won't leave the house for another month. But even so, Croatians from all over the country enjoy it with their families every Christmas, making the holiday even better.

**ANA FERNANDEZ PELAYO / ANAÏS MICHEL / SARA BAQUERO ACIERNO / PAULA CASARES VARBANOVA / IULIA MARIA BAROEAN**

**Bulgaria**

La Navidad en Bulgaria es una época importante del año porque la familia se reúne para cenar la noche del 24 de diciembre. Se come cordero y se bebe vino. La Nochevieja se celebra el 31 de diciembre. Se come Banitzza, una comida típica búlgara en la que

se meten papelitos con deseos para el año siguiente y, a medida que te la vas comiendo, vas encontrando uno o dos papelitos. También se come Vaclava. Survakane: consiste en un paseo típico que dan los niños de 4 a 12 años, por una zona determinada, con unos palos de madera y cascabeles llamados survachka. Los niños llaman a las casas, entran y golpean las espaldas de los propietarios con su survachka; les desean Feliz Año Nuevo y salud y, a cambio, los anfitriones les ofrecen regalos o dinero.

**España**

La Navidad empieza en España el 22 de diciembre, con la Lotería de Navidad. Pero las celebraciones familiares comienzan el 24 y el 25 de diciembre con la llegada de Papá Noel. Esos días se queda a comer con los familiares, cordero normalmente. Se celebra la misa de Navidad y se cantan villancicos a las puertas de las casas. El 28 de diciembre se celebra el Día de los Santos Inocentes, en el que se gastan bromas. En Nochevieja, el 31 de diciembre, se vuelve a cenar con la familia y luego, en los últimos 12 segundos de la noche, se escuchan las campanadas de un reloj y se toman las 12 uvas de Año Nuevo. Es la tradición más conocida de la Navidad Española.

Finalmente, la noche del 5 al 6 de enero, vienen los Reyes Magos que traen regalos a los niños buenos.

**Francia**

¿Qué se hace el día de Navidad? El 24 de diciembre por la noche los niños dejan sus zapatitos frente a la chimenea para que Santa los llene con obsequios, y se cuelgan pequeños regalos y dulces del árbol navideño durante la noche. La comida que se come normalmente es foie-gras, pavo con nueces y una bûche de Noël. También se pone el Belén con la cuna de Jesús. El 24 a medianoche, se pone a Jesús en su cuna. ¿Qué se hace el 31 de diciembre? A medianoche, cuando suena el reloj, nos deseamos mucha salud y un feliz Año Nuevo.

**Italia**

Algunas familias, a medianoche del 24 de diciembre, cantan canciones de Navidad; otras van a la misa para recitar villancicos; y, otras se encuentran en la plaza para felicitarse. El 25 de diciembre algunos niños encuentran debajo del árbol unos regalos de Papá Noel. Los platos típicos italianos en Navidad son: Antipasti (embutidos); Insalata di rinforzo (ensalada); agnolotti (cordero); lentejas con cotechino; y panettone (un dulce alto y con azúcar por encima).

**Rumanía**

En Rumanía la Navidad se celebra junto a la familia y con comida tradicional: sarmale (una mezcla de carne y repollo) y cozonac (una mezcla de nueces y pan con chocolate). Estos son los platos más tradicionales. También es típico cantar villancicos a las personas y que te den regalos; hay carnavales en los que la gente se disfraza de cabra y bailan el baile típico plugusor. En la noche en la que viene Papá Noel, los niños se duermen pronto y si se despiertan durante la madrugada no habrá regalos para ellos. La Navidad se celebra el 25 de diciembre y un poco antes, el 6 de diciembre, también se celebra San Nicolás.

**Musiques plus festives  
De quoi enrichir vos playlists**



**SALOMÉ BÉRESSE**

A peine avons-nous terminé de dévorer nos sucreries, et senti les premières brises d'automne, que nous revoilà, comme chaque année, plongés dans l'ambiance festive de Noël. Les boutiques remplissent leurs vitrines de neige synthétique et de guirlandes, et voilà l'école qui habille la cantine de verdure propre à la fête. Le décor s'enrichissant de jour en jour, il n'est plus que question d'allumer enceintes et radios, et d'écouter les titres devenus tradition ces dernières années. Cependant, nombreux, dont moi, avouons se lasser des mêmes refrains, et c'est ce pourquoi, je vous propose une ribambelle de morceaux moins populaires aujourd'hui et pourtant si irrésistibles !

Tout d'abord, si vous aimez la folie envoûtante de Kate Bush et le rock progressif, "December will be magic again" ne pourra que vous charmer. L'icône de l'art rock décrit l'ensorcelante transformation qu'apportent la tombée de la

neige et les préparatifs au paysage urbain des années quatre-vingt. Les paroles de fin offrent une tout autre féerie, puisque Kate Bush chante comme si elle-même était neige.

"Christmas in Hollis" est un classique pour les fans de hip-hop et de funk, produite par le groupe RUN DMC en 1987. En plus de son rap entraînant, le groupe ne manqua point d'imagination pour la mise en scène de leurs paroles. Les membres montrent leur respect envers le Père Noël en lui rendant son portefeuille trouvé dans la neige, sous les yeux d'un elfe à l'affût de divertissement. Je vous laisse imaginer la suite de ce clip.

Les Beatles ont eu droit également à leurs musiques de Noël, cependant les plus populaires sont celles de Paul McCartney "Wonderful Christmas Time" et "Happy Christmas (War is over)" de John Lennon et sa petite amie Yoko Ono. Alors que Paul nous plante en 1979, une mélodie qui une fois en tête ne nous quitte plus, John fête à l'avance la fin de la guerre du Vietnam suivie des festivités hivernales en 1971. Sa musique traduit l'idée d'unité et

de paix parmi les citoyens du monde. La chanson de Paul connut un véritable succès commercial, et atteignit le numéro 6 du classement des singles britanniques. John et Yoko remportèrent quant à eux plusieurs prix, dont le prix ASCAP de la chanson de Noël la plus interprétée en 2005. Enfin, les Ramones proposent du punk rock pour Noël, avec "Merry Christmas (I Don't Want to Fight Tonight)" de l'album "Brain Drain" de 1989. Le groupe aborde la question des disputes si propres aux retrouvailles auxquelles chacun peut s'identifier, et favorise par ses paroles la réconciliation à l'absurdité du conflit. Le tout est à la fois mélancolique et amusant, tout en étant facile à chanter et mémoriser !

Pour conclure, la meilleure façon de faire de ce Noël un Noël exceptionnel est de changer sa playlist pour de l'original et de l'entraînant. Ces grands classiques proposés mêlent valeurs, paix et réjouissance ensemble et ne pourront qu'embellir vos soirées !



# Our own personal filter for the world

Human intelligence has fascinated people for centuries. It is seen as a positive, and affects the way we perceive the world. To measure this property of people, scientists developed the 'Intelligence Quotient' or 'IQ'. Unfortunately, governments and extremist groups around the world were quick to embrace IQ – what could do wrong?

THOMAS VAN DEN WYNGAERT

Charles Spearman was the first to inquire about the correlation between in differing subjects. He wondered whether students who scored well in one subject would score worse in other areas due to focusing their efforts on that singular subject. What he discovered was that students who did well in one subject, usually did well in all subjects. Though hardly a revolutionary notion, Spearman proposed that people have a sort of 'General Intelligence that applied to all subjects.' He



believed abilities in individual subjects could change due to subject-specific (or S-) factors like teachers, interests, practice, etc., but General Intelligence could never change. Spearman called this the 'G-Factor.' Soon after Spearman published his work, Alfred Binet and Théodore Simon were tasked with identifying which students needed more help in French schools. Together, they devised the Binet-Simon Test: a method enabling them to measure intelligence objectively. They did this by comparing averages of tests which measured abilities such as memory, verbal, spatial, and numerical intelligence. To estimate how 'smart' someone was, they compared their test scores to what was normal for their age group. The age group with an average score closest to theirs was

called their 'Mental Age'. They then took this mental age, divided it by their actual age, and multiplied the result by 100. The result was their Intelligence Quotient, or 'IQ.'

### A Crystal Ball?

The test was standardised in the USA, with 7-10 types of abilities being measured, to minimize distortions of the S-Factors. Every few years, the test was adjusted so that the mean was always 100, with 68% of people scoring between 85 and 115. The test spread like wildfire, and is still commonly used today. As time passed, a correlation between IQ and overall success in life was identified. For instance, people with high IQs usually had slightly larger brains -giving a scientific basis

for the Big Brain meme. More obviously though, IQ was linked to better academic performance and scoring higher on all school examinations - with two thirds of a student's grade being predicted with an IQ test... taken 5 years earlier. Less obviously, it was found that military recruits who scored between 81 and 90 were up to three times more likely to fail recruitment training, and similarly had a fatality rate 3 times higher than that of ordinary recruits. Lastly, income has a positive correlation, but significantly lower than one would expect. Only 4.3% of one's income is dependent on IQ. Why is this the case? The most supported theory is that as your IQ goes up, your

interests change. People with high IQs often pursue entire careers simply for personal enjoyment, with little care for wealth. Now, if IQ can predict so much about you, why don't we hear more about it? Well, one reason could be IQ's considerably dark history...

### A world clouded by IQ

Binet devised these tests to help students. However, in the US they were used for a very different purpose: Instead of students, IQ-tests were given to adults in order to rank them. Not for their own good, but to know how much use they were. Along with the eugenics movement the 1940s, came a belief that lower IQs were a disease and should be eliminated. In some American states, laws were passed that enabled forced sterilization for those who did not meet a certain threshold for IQ. 'Imbecile' and 'moron' were considered scientific terms in those times, and people grew resentful of such people. Even the American Constitution saw people with lower IQs as unfit to live. As a result, 60 000 people were forcibly sterilized in the US alone. Adolf Hitler was inspired by this, and it was used as a Nazi model. The thing is, IQ is far less reliable than what we thought it to be in the past. You see, if someone born in 1900 took a modern-day IQ test, they would score around 70. If these laws still existed, we would have sterilized our entire population. Why is this the case? Well, we aren't certain. Our most reasonable guess is that over time, as society grew increasingly educated, we got better at tests. This corresponds with the fact that as public education was introduced, average IQ received a bump. Secondly, questions on IQ tests can be lacking. Tests are usually developed within a specific cultural context, leaving people with different educational or cultural backgrounds as intellectually inferior. This misinterpretation of IQ led to a perpetuation of stereotypes. Foreigners were left at a disadvantage. Even today, immigrants are rarely seen to be 'intelligent' people, and foreign accents are (wrongly) associated with incompetence. So, the idea that IQ reliable measure 'inherent' intelligence is misleading at best.

### A moral of intelligence

Governments around the world were obviously far too eager to enforce mandates based on IQ, but what led them to be so rash? Well, society has often had a biased look on intelligence. According to an American study, 65% of people believe that they are above average in

intelligence. Only 35% of people thought that they were not above average, or simply did not know whether they were. Since only 15% of people are above average (one standard deviation above the mean, >115 IQ), this represents a gross misjudgment of intelligence. If people think themselves to be more than they are, they are guaranteed to think less of people with low IQ, as they imagine the gap to be larger than reality states. Why do we have such a drive to be considered intelligent? If an average person were forced to live the life of a gifted individual, would they enjoy it? This is the principle behind the saying "Would you rather be Socrates, or a happy pig?" People considered intelligent are more likely to face depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. This is thought to be caused by extensive and unnecessary overthinking. Additionally, if gifted individuals are drawn to lower paid -though still well-paid - but interesting jobs, and the general population prefers higher paid jobs, would they really want to switch places?

Nicola Tesla is said to have fallen in love with a pigeon. Albert Einstein had a tough time in school. Newton was an abandoned child. Vincent Van Gogh cut off his ear. Galileo was detained. It seems intelligence is more of a guarantee of public service rather than happiness. That said, it does have its beauty. Many of these visionaries described a passion for their field, unmatched by that of others. The lesson to take away, I think, is that intelligence is not our singular character trait. Qualitative things like kindness, solidarity, and empathy are just as important in our modern world. If we keep seeing rival ideas as inferior, a world without conflict is far away. Instead of changing others to suit ourselves, how about we try creating a world that suits everyone? That's the thing with intelligence, the more you care to be it, the lesser you are.

# I've got nothing to say.

## Breaking out of a creative rut

I feel like I have nothing important to share with you. Whatever I write about, someone knows more about it than I do, someone would come up with a better analogy to explain it, and someone would write about it better than I ever could.

### BEATRIX BUTTERS

So what is the point? An article takes a lot of time and effort, and if it is not even enlightening, then why bother? People can just read the Economist if they want the latest on the war between Palestine and Israel. They can whip out the New Scientist if they want to read about recent scientific developments. Who am I to think that my article will be original or interesting to anyone?

This mindset has led me into an unpleasant creative rut. The best way to describe it is as an extreme form of procrastination. I do not want to use my thoughts to create anything because I do not find my thoughts original or worthy of sharing. This creative rut may sound like low self-esteem or burnout, but regardless of the diagnosis, many of us have suffered similar thoughts. While writer's block is a routine hurdle among artists[1], I sense that the experience of creative ruts among teenagers goes undiscussed. So, whilst I cannot guarantee that this article will interest anyone, I will share how I ended up here and what I am doing to be more inventive again.

The first reason I have been in a creative rut is what I call a 'knowledge gap'. I experience this 'knowledge gap' when I do not feel entitled to write about a topic because I do not know enough about it. Another way a 'knowledge gap'



could be experienced is if someone never paints sunflowers because they do not believe they are as good as Van Gogh. Here, the creator thinks there is a large 'gap' between their abilities and those of someone who could create what they would like to create. You might want to write an article about an impending recession in the EU, knowing nothing about economics. That seems like a daft idea. However, it could make for a great article. Because there was a 'knowledge gap' when you started writing your article, you taught yourself economics from scratch. This is no easy task, but now you're probably able to write an article accessible to people who do not have a background in economics. Moreover, in my experience, the 'knowledge gap' is often not as large as it seems, and over-

coming it is extremely rewarding. But what if you make a mistake in your article? This leads me to my second point, the expectation we have of ourselves and others to produce something perfect every time. This will apply to some people more than others, depending on their level of perfectionism. I imagine students have also carried perfectionistic tendencies into other creative endeavours, seeing as our school system rewards consistent perfection with excellent results. In my case, anyway, this is quite a prominent factor. Perfectionism is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it can be good to be ambitious and strive to do things to the best of your abilities. On the other hand, when starting with a creative project, perfectionism can set the bar too high. I notice this in myself: if I do

not achieve my (often unrealistic) expectations, I am discouraged and stop trying. The problem is that I anticipate that whatever I create will not live up to my expectations, so I give up before I even start. And, after a while of not doing anything, you'll stop producing creative ideas. Hence the creative rut. As Picasso once said: 'Inspiration exists, but it has to find you working'. What you create does not have to be perfect, but you should be 'working' on something to be inspired. Most of the time, our original ideas are a compilation of different ideas we have accumulated through 'working'. The more you 'work', the more material you have to forge connections and the more opportunities you have to come up with original ideas. So, it is worth turning off that perfectionistic voice when you are just starting to create. Making a mistake in your article is not the

end of the world. In fact, you likely learnt more from writing the article and making that mistake than you would have had you not written it at

I am just as sick as you are about hearing what is wrong with social media, but I could not avoid mentioning it here. I sense that social media is a common thread throughout most teens' - myself included - experience of creative ruts. Spending hours a day consuming other people's thoughts leads you to subconsciously regurgitate them at the closest occasion. I recoil whenever I catch myself doing this. The disappointment I feel after I realise that a genius idea I had for a drawing was just something I had saved on Pinterest two weeks ago is unparalleled. And, of course, my drawing was not half as good as theirs. We now have access to a whole new world of inspiration. But that also opens up a whole new world to compare ourselves with. This feeds into the self-deprecating narrative that your ideas are either not original enough or your execution is inadequate. Social media can be great for creativity. If you follow people with similar interests who inspire you, it can be a great way to improve your craft. If I am honest with myself though, I know that social media has not been a creatively constructive way to spend my time. Along with the points I mentioned before, it has diminished my attention span, so that I cannot concentrate on creative projects for as long as I used to. It is also an escape from creativity. When I do not have anything to do or feel like doing anything, I can revert to it for a less arduous form of entertainment. The solution for most of us is obvious: spend less time on social media. Easier said than done, I confess, but I have a few tips I use myself. Avoid spending time on your phone before you sleep, set time limits and uninstall apps that harm your overall well-being. You probably are not missing out.

Finally, the moment has come to mention artificial intelligence (AI). I realise I am covering lots of hot topics here. AI has and will continue to impact the way we do creative work. I am torn about the role AI will play in creative endeavours. From experimenting with it, I can

tell that AI comes up with connections that humans might not think of. Even though we like to consider ourselves as people who 'think outside of the box', most of us have somehow been socialised to think in a certain way. AI is not socialised like us, making it a great tool to bounce off ideas. It can make us consider things we might not have thought of as humans. AI can also accelerate work in several areas (e.g. drug development[2]), liberating time for humans to spend creatively. However, AI has its limitations. Although they are not socialised as we are, AI chatbots like ChatGPT have limited datasets upon which they base their ideas. These can perpetuate conventional responses and stereotypes. Like social media, AI is sometimes an escape from creative work. If we use the ideas fed to us by AI chatbots like ChatGPT without questioning them, we lose an opportunity to be creative and make something ourselves. AI frees up time, but choosing how we spend that extra time is up to us.

If there is something I have learnt from writing this article, it is that creative ruts are multifaceted. You could end up in one because of your environment, personality or mental health, but probably due to a combination of the three. I did not tackle the topic of burnout in this article, but that is another thing worth looking into if you think you are in a creative rut. Avoiding creative ruts is hard when you have so many tools at your disposal (social media, AI, etc.). Nonetheless, I think it is worth trying to maintain your creativity by, as Picasso suggested, 'working' at it as often as possible. Most of us would agree that creating something you are proud of is truly one of the most rewarding experiences. I hope that some of this resonated with you because I think that, for someone who has 'nothing to say', I have tortured you long enough.



# Real people, real lives, a real planet

**Palestine and Israel are at war, thousands are dying, and even more are suffering. In my opinion, the “victim” of the war isn’t Israel, it’s not even Palestine.**

**VERONICA JARA**

**T**he victim is Daniele Alony Mevneh, and her five-year-old daughter, who have been taken hostages by Hamas. The victims are the thousands of Palestinians that have lost their homes and futures, the victims are the more than 1.400 people killed by Hamas, and the 9.400 people killed by Israel military, but the numbers are growing as you read this. No matter what side you’re on, your hands aren’t clean, everyone is guilty of something, of taking lives, regardless of the number. This moment, this minute, they’re on the line, real lives, not numbers or statistics, but real-life people. Although 3 months ago, we were talking about another war, the one still happening in Ukraine. We were talking about the people who needed our help, and the ones who still do. Everybody was asking the same question. Who’s at fault of the war in Ukraine? It isn’t Russia’s: Russia is a piece of land, filled with memories and culture; and it’s not the Russians: there are 144,444,357 Russians, they make up 1.8% of the population, and they revolted against the war, putting



at risk their freedom. The perpetrator is Russia’s government, money-driven and hungry for power, elected under questionable circumstances. It’s not the Russian artist’s fault, who didn’t get to perform, although we have marginalized them, they’re human beings, as innocent as us. When we fail to understand the problem, we fail to see the solution. We can’t accomplish anything by marginalization. But now, no one is talking about the war in Ukraine, are they? President Zelensky wisely urged NATO not to forget about him. Just because it isn’t on our screens doesn’t mean it isn’t happening. We’ve changed Ukraine for Palestine, as if they were a pair of pants, but they aren’t pieces of cloth, unjustly sown. They’re real lives, and if the only thing we do is stare at the screen on our TVs and point,

instead of helping those who need it, or at least urging the ones who have the power, to evacuate the civilians. It’s no use to hate a whole country, a whole community, for the actions of some. Craig Mokhiber, the High Commissioner of human rights at the UN office in New York recently left his post, because he considers that, once again, just like with the Tutsis in Rwanda, Muslims in Bosnia, and many more, we are watching genocide happen before our eyes and somehow, we are powerless. In this case, he was talking about the UN, but it’s happening among us too. War doesn’t pass like the seasons of the year. Just because it’s out of sight and thus out of mind doesn’t mean it’s not happening. Faster than we know, we have all entered a screen-shaped slumber, incapable of doing even the smallest things, because we are so very scared of the big picture. The human condition speaks about love, and loss, and freedom. All human beings are supposed to be free, and they’re supposed to have the right to live peacefully, without having to be in constant fear. Those who have the power to change

things are incapable of doing so. Sometimes it’s us. Something that is affecting all of us; for instance, climate change, is also part of this vicious cycle, it had its spotlight, and it passed. Blindness lies in how we see these issues and understand them. Fear controls and paralyzes today’s society, in the benefit of death. We can see the big picture in things, but not how our own actions can help. We feel small in the face of adversity. We don’t know where the pants we’re about to throw out are going, and we’re too scared to ask, because we may feel guilty, and not throwing out this pair of pants won’t change anything anyways. Making a difference is within your reach, as small as it would be, small changes are what transform society, over time.

# Learning from failure

**ALICIA WÖHLBIER**

**D**id you ever get a bad grade? It doesn’t really matter. Especially in the younger years. What you should do, is not to try to forget that you got a bad grade, but to learn from your mistakes. The first step you could take is to look at your test or your project. Try to understand what mistake you made. Was it a careless mistake or did you not understand the topic? The important thing is to learn quickly from whatever mistake you made and not to give up. Mistakes are not necessarily bad; they show you what to do better the next time. And if you do not understand yourself which mistake you made you can always ask a friend or teacher.

You need to take away the fear of failure. Failure is an event not a person! Don’t forget, every person makes mistakes.

Even Michael Jordan made mistakes and now he is considered one of the best basketball players of all times. When he was at school, he was removed from his 9th grade basketball team. He couldn’t do anything. So, what he did, was to train harder to come back bigger, better, and stronger, cause that’s what lead him in the right direction and made him s He was rejected by his school's basketball team-ucced.

There is no loosing, just learning; no mistakes, just opportunities; no problems, only solutions. Failure is the mother of all success. Failure is a part of success! Sometimes we win and sometimes we learn for the future.

A sentence in Latin that I really like and will never forget: *erarre humanum est = to err is human.*

# Freak out!

**People love scary movies and series like “Stranger things” and “Wednesday”. What is the hype of those scary things? Why do some people that get scared easily still watch it?**

**MICHAELA ALEWIJNSE**

Scary movies , series lots and lots a people love to watch it. Millions of people watch scary things. Some people find it nothing those scary movies and series. But, why do people like it all those scary things like “stran-

ger things , Wednesday and more”? The reason is because , if you watch or do something scary gives it gives then a kick(not a real kick). Hormones are released in the brain if you watch or something scary. They give after a good feeling that you did it. The most important thing to remember all those stuff in films and series are not real its just in the movie .So there is no problem to get spooked sometimes with films and series.If you don’t like scary movie there is no problem with that you can just watch a serie like “friends”.

# On that note...

Whether you play one or not, whether you know what “bow” and “etherophone” are, everyone is a little curious about instruments. Are you ready for some of your most common questions to be answered?

CRISTINA RODRÍGUEZ FERRÁNDEZ

**What is the most difficult instrument to play?**

One of them is the violin; it is one of the most difficult instruments to play because you need to have excellent control of the intonation (the accuracy and clearness of your pitch), have great technique of using your bow and master the placement of the fingers.

**What is the most common instrument to play?**

The guitar has probably been the most popular for a long time!

**What is the least popular instrument?**

The theremin, known as the theremin or etherophone, a kind of electronic instrument, is one of the only instruments that is "played" without touching the instrument.

**What is the instrument you recommend for getting started?**

The piano or keyboard, because of its versatility and because it has many advantages, for example the keys being black and white, making it easier to remember them.

**What is the most tiring instrument?**

The drums because they put all your four limbs into practice.

**What is the newest instrument?**

One of them is the laser harp, created in 1982, in which the strings are replaced by huge lasers. You can play it by temporarily blocking one laser from reaching the ground with your fingers for example, which will make it play a note.

**What is the instrument with the most strings?**

One of them is the harp. It can have up to forty-seven strings, but this number can vary. For example, the traditional harp typically has between thirty-two and thirty-three strings, whereas King David's harp or kinnor had only ten to twelve strings.

If you want to know more about musical instruments, I recommend you visit the Museum of the instruments of Brussels, where you will be able to see the ones mentioned above and discover many more!



# Avez vous du sang sur les mains?



## En Europe une loi a été votée en 2013 pour que les produits cosmétiques fabriqué en Europe arrête d'être testé sur les animaux.

SASHA HENDRICKS

Les produits finis en Europe ne sont pas testés sur les animaux mais nous ne pouvons pas être sûrs des ingrédients qui le composent. En Chine les produits de beauté sont encore testés sur les animaux

notamment les marques l'Oréal, Chanel et Lancôme. Aujourd'hui les marques des produits cosmétiques ont différentes alternatives pour testés les produits de beauté. La première alternatives est la méthode « in vitro » : ce sont les produits qui sont testés sur des cellules humaines ou animales qui sont copier au laboratoire et ensuite envoyer aux marques pour qu'ils peuvent tester les produits de beauté. La deuxième possibilité (méthode in « vivo ») : c'est que les tissus d'animaux vivants sont fabriqués au laboratoire et ensuite envoyés aux marques de produits de beauté pour qu'ils soient testés sur place.

La dernière méthode est « in silico » : ce sont des scientifiques qui recréent informati-

quement des modèles de cellules et comparent alors les molécules déjà connues ou pas. A peu près toutes les marques de cosmétiques ont un laboratoire pour ces genres d'expériences.

Pour savoir si les produits cosmétiques sont testés sur les animaux ou pas, il suffit de regarder l'étiquette du produits car les marques sont obligés de noter « non testés sur les animaux » ou « cruelty free ». Il y'a aussi des applications ou site web qui vous permettent de vérifier si les produits cosmétiques sont « non testés sur les animaux » et aussi si les produits chimiques utilisés dans les produits sont nocifs ou pas, comme par exemple : Cruelty free, Think dirty, EWG Healty living, Code check ou encore leaping bunny, qui est un site web.

# The Environmental impact of Holiday Celebrations

What a scary title, no? As a Christmas-lover myself, that sounds like something I do not want to know anything about. Will knowledge about this topic ruin my Christmas spirit? Will it ruin yours? Spoiler alert: don't worry, it won't.

**CHARLOTTE WIEMANN : ILLUSTRATION BY REAGAN VERSHELDE**

Christmas is known as this cheerful holiday where hearts glow. Children running around, excited for the special day. Christmas songs blasting everywhere and lights glistening outside in the dark. From another perspective Christmas is known for giant amounts of consumption. We go "Christmas-shopping" to buy a bunch of things: that one little item for your mom, another something for your dad, not to forget about gifts for your grandparents and aunts and uncles. Then presents for siblings, cousins, or friends as well. Of course, we want to give these presents in a pretty state, so we will use glossy paper, ribbons, and tape to wrap them up nicely. What else is there to buy? Starting with a Christmas tree, the list goes on all the way from shiny lights and those extra special napkins to ugly Christmas sweaters for all members of the family. Personally, I'm already looking forward to the giant selection of Christmas cookies my grandma always bakes and the delicious dishes we eat

around Christmas time. And that's by far not everything. But those things are necessary, no? Could we really let go of those wonderful things? Christmas without a Christmas tree? Sounds like an awful Christmas to me. How can we jump into the holiday joyfully without feeling guilty about our spendings? Will we have to take nasty measures? But wait a minute – are they even necessary? Let's look at some numbers and facts first.

During Christmas time, we produce about 20% - 30% more waste than during other seasons of the year. Almost one in five unwanted gifts will land in the trash this year. So those useless gifts really are horrible. Think about the immense amounts of money that get invested in gifts annually only to be thrown away a couple weeks after.

Each year we throw enough wrapping paper away to circle the world nine times. All that paper just for us to rip it away in a few seconds. Even though a lot of this paper is recyclable, the glossy kind with fancy designs and glitter will land in the general waste.

Even though they are tiny, Christmas light bulbs have a significant impact on our energy consumption. People in the United States for example, use 6.63 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity each year to power holiday lights. That's enough energy to run 14 million refrigerators. Admittedly, in the US Christmas decorations are at another level than in Europe but I'm sure that you could also run a lot of refrigerators with the energy used by European Christmas light bulbs.



According to a British study the total food waste goes up by 30% during Christmas, compared to the waste created during the rest of the year (which is already way too much). In the UK, over one in seven consumers buys more food and 66% of people admit to throwing the rest in the bin. I didn't find numbers for Belgium, but I wouldn't be surprised if the figures are similar.

For the preparation and storage/packaging of holiday meals, UK costumers use almost 4,500 tons of tin foil each Christmas and plastic waste generated by UK consumers during the holiday season equals the weight of 3.3 million Emperor Penguins. An average emperor Penguin weighs 23kg. Let's do the math together: calculate that by 3.3 million. 75.900.000kg of plastic only for the UK. Imagine how many more zeros we would have to add to the worldwide plastic waste.

Those facts are terrifying. But cutting away something as important as Christmas decorations still sounds devastating. So, what can we do? How can each of us contribute to bringing those numbers down? Of course, we can't change everything, but small efforts from each one of us will eventually add up and pay off.

Let's start with our first concern: unwanted gifts. The solution to this issue is quite simple. I'm sure we all have that one aunt who gives us this awfully boring book every Christmas, which we never actually read. Wouldn't it be better for both you and the auntie if she gives you a book you would be really interested in and

look forward to reading? Wouldn't that make her feel way better about her present as well, seeing you enjoying it? So don't be shy and send her a list of books you crave, so that you can get what you desire and at the same time save the environment, at least a little bit. And if you want to go a bit further, what about enjoying the reading of a used book – a book that someone else has loved to read before? For cases other than books, you can always opt for a gift card as the recipient can choose what will be best to get for themselves.

Simple solutions for wrapping waste exist as well. Many of you must know what I'm talking about when I say, "Amazon gift bags". You know, the reusable ones made from tissue. My family adores these, and it makes me proud to think how much waste we have avoided reusing them again and again, long after that one Amazon gift was delivered. Another option would be to use the paper from a read-through newspaper. Instead of throwing it away, wrap your present in it.

To reduce energy consumption through Christmas decoration, you can simply try not to go overboard and (very importantly) not to leave your Christmas lights turned on, when you aren't even there to enjoy them, so turn them off when you leave the room. The Belgian city Liège has taken more thoughtful measures this year. Street decoration is limited to 45 days instead of 50 and turned-on hours are reduced by 2. Even though that might not sound like a lot at first, a

small effort goes a long way.

Let's look at food next. What are sustainable solutions for this problem? The main problem seems to be the food we throw away after purchasing it. But no one benefits from that. Spending your money and throwing it away without proper use. Instead of going grocery shopping blindly we can plan how much food we will need and buy according to our prior calculations.

To make that food stay edible for a few more days we need to package it and keep it cold to prevent any kind of mold. Instead of using tin foil or similar items such as plastic wrap for this purpose, we should opt for reusable Tupperware. As we can use it plenty of times, we will eventually even save money. So, it's a win-win. We use what we spend our money on, and we can even save some money over time, while saving the environment.

I hope I didn't ruin your Christmas spirit all too much. Instead, I hope this has encouraged you to consider a greener way of celebrating Christmas. It's hard to believe that small differences like gift cards and wish lists, tissue gift bags and newspaper wrapping paper, minimalistic decorations, and Tupperware instead of tinfoil can make a difference for our environment. But all these small actions, taken together, can have a considerable impact.

# PLÄTZCHEN

Baking „Plätzchen“ (Christmas biscuits) is a very common German tradition. The family gathers together to bake them, often with Christmas music in the background to underline the festive spirit.

ELA LESEMANN

The word “Plätzchen” goes back to the Latin word “placenta”, meaning “cake”. There are many theories as to when Plätzchen were invented and by whom. However, most people believe that a form of these biscuits existed before Christ was born, only that they did not have the name yet.

Now, how can we differentiate a biscuit and a Plätzchen? History defines a clear separation. In the past, nobles often liked to eat small pastries with their coffee and tea.

These were not necessarily nutritious but very sugary and were called Plätzchen. On the contrary, when English travelers were on ships for a long time, there was a certain kind of ship's rusk.

This pastry was very nutritious and long-lasting and was called biscuit. There are many types of Plätzchen for example cinnamon stars, gingerbread men, and „Butterplätzchen“.

Here's a recipe for Butterplätzchen:

Ingredients:

125g of sugar

125g of butter

375g of flour

2 egg yolks

2-3 spoons of milk

1 teaspoon of baking powder

A small quantity of grated lemon peel (organic)

Method:

Mix the ingredients, and knead them into a dough. Chill the dough in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Then, roll it out onto a flat surface, and

use cookie cutters in shapes of your choice - I usually use Christmas-related forms such as stars or bells.

Be careful not to spread the dough too thin, or the Plätzchen will cook too quickly and burn.

If you want to decorate your Plätzchen with sugar or chocolate sprinkles, don't forget to brush them with egg yolk to make the sprinkles stick.

Bake at 200° for roughly 10 min until they turn golden and crispy. Enjoy!



# CHRISTMAS RECIPES

PANAGIOTIS KAROLIDIS

## How to make hot cocoa (delicious and easy)!!!

Place a milk of your choice in a saucepan over medium-low heat. Using milk instead of water, makes this hot chocolate extra creamy and flavourful. Whole milk or 2% milk is better, but you can choose any milk that you want (you can even use unsweetened almond milk).

Whisk in cocoa powder and sugar, and heat until warm.

Once the milk is warm, add chocolate chips, whisking until they melt into the milk.

For extra flavour add a splash of vanilla extract (this step is optional).

Serve immediately, topped with your favourite garnishes: marshmallows, whipped cream, chopped chocolate, crushed candy canes marshmallows and/or more.

Christmas Hot Chocolate {Seriously Rich & Creamy Cocoa!} | PWWB

## How to make gingerbread man cookies

Ingredients

- Melted Unsalted Butter, to grease
- 125g Unsalted Butter, at room temperature
- 100g (1/2 cup, firmly packed) brown sugar
- 125ml (1/2 cup) golden syrup
- 1 egg, separated
- 375g (2 1/2 cups) plain flour
- 1 tbsp ground ginger

• 1 tsp mixed spice

• 1 tsp Coles Bicarbonate Soda

• Plain flour, to dust

• 150g (1 cup) pure icing sugar, sifted

• 8-10 drops red liquid food colouring

• 8-10 drops green liquid food colouring

• Smarties, to decorate

Step 1

The first step is to preheat the oven to 180°C. Brush 2 baking trays with melted butter to lightly grease them.

Step 2

Use an electric beater to stir the butter and sugar in a bowl until pale and creamy. Add the golden syrup and egg yolk and beat until combined. Stir in the flour, ginger, mixed spice, and bicarbonate of soda. Turn onto a lightly floured surface (so it is not sticky) and knead it until it is smooth (tip use a rolling pin so it does not get stuck on your hand). Press dough into a disc. Cover it with plastic wrap and place it in the fridge for 30 minutes to rest.

Step 3

Meanwhile, place the egg white in a clean, dry bowl. Use an electric beater to beat until soft peaks form. Gradually add Icing sugar and stir until stiff peaks form. Divide the icing among 3 bowls. Cover 1 bowl with plastic wrap and place in the fridge. Add red colouring to the 2nd bowl and stir until combined. Then add green colouring to remaining bowl and stir until combined. Cover with plastic wrap and place in the fridge.

Step 4

Place the dough between 2 sheets of baking paper and roll it out until it's about 4mm thick. Use a gingerbread man cutter to cut out shapes. Place them on trays about 3cm apart. Repeat this till there is no dough left.

Step 5

Bake them in the oven for 10 minutes



or until they turn brown (that way you know they are ready). Remove them from the oven (be careful it's hot). Transfer them to a rack to cool, and continue to climb

Step 6

Place prepared icings in small plastic bags. Cut a small hole in a corner of each bag. Pipe icing over gingerbread men to decorate. Finish with Smarties (you can use them as buttons).

Sources for more delicious recipes these websites

<https://www.taste.com.au/recipes/gingerbread-men/3a04ab1d-a84a-424f-800a-7ebcbe92fa09>

[\(https://celebratingsweets.com/homemade-hot-chocolate/\)](https://celebratingsweets.com/homemade-hot-chocolate/)

# The Dream team

LEONIE GOODCHILD  
VALENTINA SKAČKOVÁ

## Can you introduce yourselves ?

AR: My name is Aristides Fragoulis. You can call me Aris. I'm in the S7 German section. I've been in this school since maternelle, and it's a great pleasure to finish off my school career by becoming one of the big bosses.

AD: Hello. I'm Adrian Bernabeu. I'm in the S7 French section, and I've been in this school since S1.

J: I'm Josephine (or Fien for friends!), from the S7 Dutch section.

C: My name is Caroline Gombalova, I'm in the french section, in S7.

## How have you taken part in SPRINGFEST in previous years?

AR: So personally I started my Springfest experience in S1. It was just a small thing with Mr Tauche.

*We went on stage with him and we sang the Eye of the Tiger like. We were very small kids back then and it was really cute. I clearly loved this experience and it motivated me to become part of Springfest again. Then of course, all the COVID years came, unfortunately.*

But then in S5, I just thought I'd go for it, and I became a crew member, then a crew manager in S6 and now this year, I'm a Big Boss.



AD: For me, I started my experiences with Springfest in S5 as a member of the IT team. I then became the manager of the IT team in S6, and now I'm a Big Boss.

C: I was Big Boss last year, and the previous years I was lights manager and team member.

## What motivated you to become a Big Boss?

AR: I was, like, always admiring all the people who were organising Springfest, since I first experienced it in primary. And it became kind of like a dream of mine, to be on this stage one day. So, in S5, I thought, OK, I'll just apply as a crew member to take the first step towards that. Then I became crew manager last year and this invited me to go the last step (smile).

AD: For me it's firstly a learning experience: I learned quite a lot already and there's a lot of things I can still learn. And second reason: Caroline suggested it, she thought that I would be a good fit - and I thought she might be right (laugh). So I went for it.

J: I was crew managers with Aris last year and we enjoyed it a lot, being very involved in Springfest, and I think it motivated us.

*Already last year when we got selected, I was thinking "I wish I would have done even more". I saw the big bosses and their jobs and I just saw myself in that position. And I'm very excited to have become one of them.*

## How did you get the Big Boss position?

J: In reality, it's just an interview you can apply for, and then you just talk about yourself, your motivations and your skills, and then they decide after that. But I think it does help if in previous Springfests you've already had some sort of higher position. So, for example, we've all been managers before, which really helped.

C: Little tip, prepare a Power point presentation, it makes you look more professional (smile).

## Who is in charge of what in the team?

AR: So I'm responsible for the organisational team. So crew, stewards, (which, btw, is the new name of security), and some of the activities, so the haunted house, the escape room and the sports tournaments.

AD: I take care of the other activities, so games, workshops, the new science fair and couple more teams and IT too. But we help each other out a lot: I'll probably be working with Haunted House and escape Room, for example. Oh, and it turns out I also take care of the T-shirts this year. So that's kind of fun (laughs).

J: I am responsible for all the teams that are participating in the Act, and then Caroline is responsible for the teams that help backstage during the Act. So that'd be make up and costumes. And then Fashion Show.

C: And the Music Festival.

## How much time do you devote to your job as Big Bosses?

J: I think first of all, it's safe to say that it really depends week to week. Because in the past few weeks before the holidays, we had to do a lot of interviews for manager positions, so that took a lot of our time. I feel like none of us had, like a single lunch break or a single 15 minute break where we weren't working except for Adrian maybe. We do have at least one meeting a week with our team.

AD: I would personally estimate between three and four hours of work per week so far.

C: It mostly depends on whether there is an issue to solve or not:

*I could spend zero time on Springfest one week, and have every second be about Springfest another. On average, it must be around 2-3 hours of sending emails, interviews, checking up on my teams, finding rooms, informing teachers, replying to messages...*

AR: It'll be much more after the pre-bac when the rehearsals start.

## What is your favourite part of SPRINGFEST?

J: My favourite part is the Act and it's my part (smile). I just love seeing how everything falls into place somehow, even though at the beginning it may seem difficult. I always love seeing the finished product on the day itself and it's awesome that we can do that with just students and a few teachers.

C: Same as Fien: the final part of preparations, when we see everything we did come together. I remember last year, I cried; it was beautiful to see this project we'd worked on for a year being all grown - kind of like a baby, Springfest is our baby.

AR: When I was in primary, I admired the security and crew team. I don't know, maybe it was also because they were all Greeks (laughs) but seemed really hardworking (more laughs). I mean, of course, every single team is hard working, but this stuck in my mind, you know, and from then on, I thought, well, I also want to be like one of them.

AD: On my side, I'm quite excited for the science fair this year, I've seen what they are planning and it's quite interesting.

## The theme is "dare to dream"; how did you come up with it?

AD: So first, we had to find a theme and we wanted to make it broad and easy to work with and then we had multiple ideas, all kind of shady...

(Aris laughs)

AD: ...according to some people. But we had to consider the 25th year of the EEB3, and management wants us to work together with the lower school years, at least by having a common theme. We found that out of the theme ideas we had, "Dare to Dream" was the easiest one to implement in all of secondary, primary, and maternelle.

J: And we just thought it sounded nice, too.

What was your biggest dream as a child?

AR: Relating to school or like outside of school as well?

*If you dreamt of school as a child, then sure. But it can be anything (smile).*

AR: To be honest, I've always dreamt of becoming a doctor one day, so I devoted myself to that. I want to study medicine next year. And that's what we want to tell with this message of DARE to dream: we want to tell students that you can dream of anything and fulfil your dreams.

AD: I remember when I was small, I used to dream of becoming an inventor, to create and build stuff... And I guess it translates into me wanting to be an engineer now, except I didn't know that job existed at the time (smile).

J: Wow, you guys were, like, really smart kids. I just wanted a house full of cats, truly. But you know, it's OK. I might still get that. I guess in terms of jobs, I really wanted to be like a vet 'cause I love animals. But I also had a small Springfest dream, thanks to my older brother. He was always talking to me about it as he was a manager for a couple of things, but he never became big boss. He was always telling me, you have to become big boss. And I did (smile).

C: My biggest dream as a child was to be a spy (laughs).

What are some changes or new additions you would like to see in SPRINGFEST this year?



*AD: This year we're introducing the science fair: chemistry, biology, physics and maybe even ICT experiments that will be shown to the school.*

We're also planning on getting even bigger teams, for food and drinks and crew.

C: And we'd love to have more activities, just like during the "old" Springfest.

One of the two big themes that the school wants to take care of this year is sustainability. How do you plan to make Springfest more "eco"-friendly?

J: Something we've been doing for a

few years now is reusing the décor from previous Springfest editions, and just paint over the cardboard frames.

AR: For the fashion show, a big subject is only using second-hand or deadstock fabric for the designs.

AD: We'd also like to make the food and drinks healthier this year.

into the Act's storyline. We're already thinking about how that could work, and we have very talented acting managers, so I'm sure they'll come up with something great. And then I guess we'll try to include it in the activities, maybe the workshops.

AD: Yeah, on the side of activities, we may try to present a game related to the 25 years of the school, like maybe questions about it and stuff.

2024 will mark the school's 25th anniversary; how would you like to incorporate that into SPRINGFEST?

J: For sure it's going to get integrated

What are your best memories of Springfest when you were younger?

AR: Oh, there are a lot!

AD: I'll go first! I remember a specific moment in S1 or S2, I was just waiting in line for the bumper cars...(pause). Yes, I remember now, I was speaking with friends, I was having fun. It's not a big event or anything, but just being with my friends, doing activities together, walking all around school; it was just really, really fun.

J: Well, I always loved just watching The Act because, of course, in primary we got to see it with all our primary friends. But I always went the evening before with my mum. I thought it was really cool to be, first of all, at school that late - that was crazy to me. Also, there was something different about seeing the opening ceremony together with all the parents.

Also, I don't know if you guys remember Wonderland, which was in the gyms. My brother made that happen, so he was able



to sneak me in with my friends. That was really fun!

**C:** My best memories were probably all the activities. And the food. And how the OC was inside. Just how everything was open for everyone.

**AR:** Personally, I think my best memory from Springfest was also the Opening Ceremony. More specifically, I just loved that, for example, there were always student music bands playing and they were also involved in the Act in this way. I'm very much a "music"-person, so it was great to see! But then, I've always admired the stunt team with all their crazy jumps. In general I just love, like everything in Springfest!

**J:** It's so difficult to pick a favourite.

### Any stereotypes in the group? As in, the bubbly one, the one that's always late to meetings...

**C:** Stereotypes... The one that's often late to meetings (or sometimes just won't show up): probably Adrian (smile). The bubbly one... I think Fien, whom I love – I can't say anything bad about her. Aris is the one who always manages to stay serious.

**J:** Will say - not to throw anyone under the bus – but Adrian missed a couple of meetings at the beginning of the year...

**AD:** Talking about teacher big bosses... There is one teacher who's like the achiever: when they want something, they will get it.

**AR:** They will fight for it. Literally (laughs). I will say something about Fien because she was also my comanager in crew last year, and I

think I know her pretty well now. Fien is someone who wants to do things in a perfect way. And she's the only person I know that actually manages that. To do those things perfectly.

**J:** I thought you were going to roast me. I was not expecting something so sweet. And Caroline... I could never roast her. That's my wife. No, she's perfect. Beautiful. She's smart. She's intelligent. She's an angel. How could I ever say something mean?

**AR:** But I think that in the end, we all love each other. Maybe you should interview us after Springfest, and then it will be crazy (smile).

### Are you more of a daydreamer or a down to earth person?

**J:** I don't think I'm a big dreamer. I mostly only zone out when I'm very tired. I think I'm quite down to earth in my daily life. But what I will say is that I am the person with the wildest dreams. It's insane, I dream every night and it's crazy, sometimes I'll wake up and I just don't believe that this is my real life and that I'm capable of dreaming these things up. But in the conscious world, I'm more down to earth.

**AD:** Daydreamer, I often get distracted in my own thoughts and just think about anything, really.

**AR:** I think I'm also like quite a daydreamer. I can say that because during classes that are sometimes boring (laughs), I often look up and I think like, what can I become one day?

**C:** I'm both. To be fair, I think everyone daydreams from time to time, but some people just keep their head in the clouds (smile). I don't tend to daydream that much in school... though in some classes...



### What are you most excited about in this year's Springfest?

**J:** First of all, I'm always excited for Springfest, but this year especially, I think it's going to be really exciting to see how it will all get bigger. People are more interested in Springfest, and we just want it to keep growing. So, I think that's exciting, but I'm always just excited for the food because it's always so good! And I think the fashion show is a really underrated part of Springfest, which I always really enjoy.

**AR:** personally, I'm looking forward to the whole event because it's our last Springfest (because we're in S7) and so we want to really make the best out of it since we're also the key organisers.

**AD:** Well, if you go study in the VUB, you'll definitely hear it! I've heard people there complain about the noise...(laughs) So to answer your question, I'm looking forward to the Science Fair!

**J:** And I will say one more thing: I love everything about Springfest. But my favourite part really is just the behind-the-scenes working with all these people and seeing how much work really goes into it. The vibes are always the best.

You may have moments of stress, but it's so exciting to see like

a project for which people really want to give their all. I think you can just feel it. And I think it's just amazing vibes and energy!

### If you were a fairytale character archetype, which one would you be and why?

**AD:** The crazy wizard.

**J:** I want to have a golden egg (like in Jack and the Giant Beanstalk), so whichever archetype has a golden egg.

**C:** I want to be Bibble. But I doubt people know who Bibble is. I guess I'm a fairy who's like, specialised in animals. Or like Snow White, you know: animals listen to her when she sings (smile).

**AR:** Well, I'm not sure... maybe the others can suggest something?

**J:** Obviously the evil stepmother. Let's be real. And I think Mrs Roig would be the fairy godmother because she's just so sweet and helps people.

**AR:** Mr Wustenberghs can be called Prince Charming, because he's, like, so nice. And he has an idea for everything. And he's handsome.

**J:** And then I guess that that makes Mrs Spanou the princess of the story (laughs).

### Springfest has changed massively over the past few years, to become a much more school-centered event. What do you think of this change?

**AD:** There's more separation. I remember, when I was in S1/S2, we could go up to the primary, and there were food trucks. Honestly; I preferred the "Old Springfest". But I also understand why we can no longer do what we did 3-4 years ago. I want to make Springfest as close as we can as to what we had.

**AR:** To summarise, I think that there are two factors that led to the big change.

**First of all, COVID. Springfest was online for a while, and then very restricted back in school. This led to the separation of the secondary**



## Interview

### Springfest into two days.

Sure, we felt more “united” when the Act was in the gym, but that wouldn’t be possible today.

J: I think from a logistics like point of view, it’s impossible, but I don’t mind the separation into S1-S3 and S4-S7! It makes Springfest feel more personalized. However, I do agree that it used to be really fun that you’d be able to move freely between primary and secondary.

AR: We’re doing our very, very best to organize a Springfest which is pleasant for everyone!

Anything you’d like to say to people that are thinking of applying/ have applied?

J: If you’re thinking of applying, just do it really. Springfest is so huge and there’s such a variety of teams that there’s a spot for everyone.

AD: Just dare to dream and dare to go for those dreams - apply and help make Springfest epic.

C: And a message for the younger years: if you tried to be manager but didn’t get the job, don’t give up: try again next year, you never know what will happen!

We’ve asked you about which stereotype you are; but what do you see in others? What makes this year’s core team a dream team?

AD: The three of them are really

motivated. They attend all the interviews and meetings. Unlike me (smile).

C: The main reason is my presence in it (laugh). And Fien too. In all seriousness, we all bring something to the team. My wife Fien is very creative, motivated and amazing, which is perfect for the Act. Adrian is really smart and has this kind of messy genius (smile). For Aris, he’s social and confident and he’s perfect for talking to the teachers.

J: We have each other’s backs, for starters. Aris is great at talking to people. And then Adrian, he is so good with computers, it comes in handy all the time. Then Caroline, I think she’s just an angel. Really. But she also has the experience from last year, which of course helps us loads.

AR: Everyone has different talents and different skills. And when we put those talents and skills together, we can use that to create a Springfest that’s perfect for everyone.



## Jokes

# Top 10 Christmas Jokes by Charlotte Gross

- 1. What did the snowman say to the aggressive carrot ?  
Get out of my Face**
- 2. What is one of the best Christmas present that you can give and receive ?  
A broken drum. Why ? Because you can’t beat it**
- 3. Why did Santa have to go to the hospital ?  
Because of his poor elf**
- 4. Why did Mrs.Claus insist take an umbrella ?  
« Because of the rain, dear. »**
- 5. Where does Santa Claus go swimming ?  
The north Pool**
- 6. What do you call a old snowman ?  
Water**
- 7. How can you tell that Santa is real ?  
You can always sense his present**
- 8. What do snowman eat for breakfast ?  
Ice Chrispies**
- 9. What is every parent’s favorite Christmas song ?  
Silent Night !**
- 10. What do they sing at a snowman’s birthday party ?  
Freeze a jolly good fellow !**





