

TOOTS

EXPO TOOTS 100
22.04 – 31.08

THE SOUND
OF A BELGIAN
LEGEND

KBR BRUSSELS

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100

KBR 8

MIM

TOOTS

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Press release: The “Toots 100. The sound of a Belgian legend” exhibition: The sound of Toots revealed

On 22 April 2022, KBR (Royal Library of Belgium) and the MIM (Musical Instruments Museum) will open the “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” exhibition. In 2022, Toots Thielemans would have celebrated his 100th birthday. The “ketje” from the Marolles neighbourhood was an accordionist, guitarist, whistler, harmonica player and global star. He was born and raised in the heart of Brussels and then went to America to play on the stage. The exhibition takes visitors into the world of Toots, his life, his work and compositions, his instruments, his technique and his timbre.

Never-before-seen music and images

After Toots’ death, the Toots Thielemans Foundation donated his personal archive to KBR and his instruments were given a new home in the Musical Instruments Museum. Now, the two collections are being reunited and we will be exhibiting them to the public for the very first time. Visitors will discover an impressive collection of **musical instruments, sound recordings, personal correspondence, sheet music** and musical and visual material that has never been published before. They can fully immerse themselves in the sound of Toots and learn all about the man behind the legend.

“We know about Toots the musician, but we know less about Toots the composer. His famous “Bluesette” is in fact the tree that hides a forest of more than a hundred compositions to be discovered or rediscovered. Toots brilliantly mixes different styles while drawing inspiration from his long practice of improvisation, inextricably linked to composition in jazz.”

- Hugo Rodriguez, curator KBR

Experience the sound of Toots

The theme of the exhibition is the sound of Toots. At the start of the exhibition, visitors will be given their own **headphones**. They will experience Toots’ sound in different ways: as part of the audience at a live concert or in an intimate listening session. Toots’ film music and the many commercials for which he composed the music will be heard in various settings. The Toots discography invites the visitor to listen to pieces from the oeuvre of this world-famous Belgian star. Visitors will also learn that playing the harmonica is not as simple as it seems.

More than an overview

The exhibition is much more than an overview of Toots' life and work. Visitors can get a glimpse into his rich music career and discover how Jean-Baptiste Thielemans became "Toots" and how he lived his life. Visitors will also find out who inspired Toots and who he inspired in turn. The fact that Toots remains a source of inspiration after his death is demonstrated in the **work of contemporary Belgian artists** such as Jean-Claude Salemi, Pieter Fannes, Jan van der Veken, Dominique Goblet and Leen Van Hulst.

The location: the Palace of Charles of Lorraine

The rooms of the Palace of Charles de Lorraine, an 18th-century jewel situated in the heart of Brussels, will form the backdrop to this experiential exhibition. Nowadays, the palace is part of the building which houses KBR, but the façade and rooms have been preserved in their original grandeur.

2022: The Year of Toots in Brussels

Brussels and jazz are inextricably linked. Together with the Private Toots Thielemans Foundation, The Legacy of Toots Thielemans Association and visit.brussels, KBR and the MIM will make 2022 a real Toots Year, with various activities and initiatives throughout the city. The Legacy of the Toots Thielemans Association collects and coordinates everything concerning this special Toots year and is responsible for general communication. KBR and the MIM are organising the exhibition "Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend". The exhibition at KBR and a birthday concert in Bozar will be the highlights of the festive year. Other events on the programme are the Brussels Jazz Weekend, the Brosella Festival and an international scientific symposium on Toots that will take place at KBR from 9 to 11 May 2022.

Curators

The curators of the exhibition are musicologists Hugo Rodriguez (KBR), Vanessa Braekeveld (KBR) and Géry Dumoulin (MIM).

- Hugo Rodriguez holds a doctorate in Musicology from the Université Libre de Bruxelles as well as a master's degree in French and Romance languages and literatures. He is a scientific assistant at the Music Department of KBR.
- Géry Dumoulin works at the Musical Instruments Museum where he is responsible for the wind instruments collection.
- Vanessa Braekeveld is a scientific assistant at the Public Relations Department of KBR and is responsible for organising temporary exhibitions.

A collaboration between KBR and the MIM

KBR (Royal Library of Belgium) and the Royal Museums of Art and History, of which the Musical Instruments Museum is a part, are federal scientific institutions. They belong to the Belgian Science Policy Office and fall under the responsibility of State Secretary Thomas Dermine.

The Music Department of KBR is the country's leading scientific centre for the preservation of musical documents. It was the wish of Toots Thielemans and his wife to donate his archive to KBR in order to establish a fund. Therefore, when Toots passed away in 2016, the Toots Thielemans Foundation donated his very extensive personal archive to KBR. The Toots Thielemans Fund contains hundreds of sound recordings (on 78 rpm records, vinyl, CDs, videotapes DVDs, etc.) and photographs, many of which had been commissioned. Furthermore, it contains press cuttings, some fifty scores (original manuscripts, copies, editions), books, letters and concert programmes of which many are signed. Finally, the fund also contains cartoons and portraits of Toots as well as trophies, certificates, medals and awards, sometimes humorous and folkloristic, with which Toots Thielemans was thanked or honoured during his life.

After his death, Toots Thielemans' musical instruments found a home in the Musical Instruments Museum. The private Toots Thielemans Foundation donated eleven instruments to the MIM on which Toots had played during his life, including five harmonicas, but also his very first guitar and the Gibson on which he practised in his flat in New York. In addition, there is an accordion from the Brussels-based Deveydt brothers which Toots played as a small boy and an accordion with which he enjoyed entertaining his company at home in La Hulpe.

The donation also includes a beautiful Belgian foot bass and some memorabilia, including an original photo of little Jean Thielemans with his accordion and the certificate he obtained as a child at an accordion competition in Brussels.

“An exhibition on the occasion of the 100th birthday of Toots Thielemans – by far the most internationally renowned Belgian jazz musician – is a wonderful opportunity to show the diversity of the collections of the Federal Scientific Institutions to the public. These institutions have a story to tell for everyone, right in the heart of our capital. Thanks to the collaboration between KBR and the MIM, visitors can view never-before-seen music and visual material from this Belgian icon.”

-Thomas Dermine, State Secretary for Economic Recovery and Strategic Investments, in charge of Scientific Policy



7-year-old Jean-Baptiste Thielemans with his accordion

Content of the exhibition

Part 1 – This is Toots

The first part of the exhibition tells us who Toots Thielemans is. His life is a succession of fascinating encounters and discoveries that often prove to be decisive for his eventual career. New people, new instruments, new musical styles. Toots gets the jazz bug by listening to the swinging music of Louis Armstrong and the jazz manouche of Django Reinhardt. Not much later, he also starts listening to avant-garde beboppers like Charlie Parker. His discovery of the jazz scene in America is the start of a flourishing career. He will leave an indelible impression, not only in the jazz world, but also far beyond.



Toots with the Charlie Parker All Stars, Salle Pleyel, Paris, 1949

“Thanks to the National Lottery and its players, this spring you will discover never-before-seen music and visual material by Toots Thielemans. This Brussels “ket” from the Marolles has risen above himself but has always remained simply Toots. He is Belgian heritage! Heritage that the National Lottery is happy to support. In this way, we are not only celebrating the musician, but also a rich Belgian heritage collection that KBR is able to present for the first time.”

- Sammy Mahdi, State Secretary for Asylum and Migration, in charge of the National Lottery

Part 2 – The Sounds of Toots

The second part of the exhibition highlights Toots' sound universe. Toots is more than his harmonica, after all. He started with the accordion, then the guitar and then whistling. At the end of the fifties, he developed a unique playing technique: the melody he played on the guitar, he whistled an octave higher. This original combination will make the song "Bluesette" a true success.

No matter which instrument he plays, Toots is a melodist and a remarkable improviser. He creates his own characteristic timbre from his jazz practice and his European musical roots. Although his sound is very natural and spontaneous, it requires a lot of study and practice, both technically and theoretically.

Toots describes his timbre as "somewhere between a smile and a tear". It reflects his personality and distinguishes him from other harmonica players. His advice to young musicians was never to copy others, including himself, but to follow their own path: "Play what you are". Or in other words: "Let your music be the expression of your inner voice".

BLUESETTE
JEAN THIELEMANS
Comp. 279 North Broadway
Yonkers, N.Y. US
Copyright US, Canada 1963

♩ = 150

Choruses After choruses back to A and at go to coda

coda

repeat ad lib

Manuscript of Bluesette, 1963

Part 3 – The Worlds of Toots

In the third part of the exhibition, visitors are taken into the world(s) of Toots. Toots cannot be pigeon-holed. His 70-year musical career spans various styles, genres, worlds and cultures. His curiosity for all kinds of music never stopped, and he left his mark everywhere.

Toots is the glue that binds all these worlds together, through his music and specific timbre. That “glue” consists of two components: the musical component, in which Toots is always looking for a fusion of his European roots and Afro-American music, and the human component with his search for the right sound and sincere self-expression, the “play who you are”.

Discover these components in Toots’ worlds: his own compositions, the jazz styles he played, Latin American music, the film and advertising world and the social dimension within jazz.



Toots for a promotional film for “Midnight Cowboy”

Part 4 – Toots inspires

Toots Thielemans was and is an icon. Musically, visually and culturally. As a musician and especially as a harmonica player, he was an example for his contemporaries such as Stevie Wonder, but also for current, young musicians. As a true symbol in the history of jazz and popular music, both in Europe and in America, Toots continues to inspire musicians from all over the world. It is not only his music that makes him an icon. Toots is listened to and seen. His stage presence, silhouette and recognisable face inspire painters, cartoonists and caricaturists.

Amateurs, fans, professionals, they all love to portray his characteristic smile, glasses and moustache. Culturally too, Toots has acquired an iconic status. Despite his dual nationality, he has remained the darling of the Marolles, with a genuine love for Brussels and Belgium. His star does not only shine as a musician, but his persona and music are part of our collective memories, of Belgian heritage.

Practical information

Dates and opening times

- From 22 April to 31 August 2022
- Open Tuesday to Sunday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Nocturne events from 5 p.m. to 10 p.m. on 5 May, 19 May, 2 June, 16 June and 23 June
- Closed on Mondays and some public holidays (1 May, 26 May, 5 June, 21 July, 15 August)

Tickets and fares

- Standard: € 15
- Concessions: € 11
 - 65+, students, groups > 15 people, Cultuursmakers, Davidsfonds, on presentation of your ticket for the MIM
- museumPASSmusées: € 4
- Free:
 - -18 years, teacher's card, persons with reduced mobility (+1 accompanying person), job seekers, ICOM card, Belspo card

Location and accessibility

KBR – Mont des Arts 28, 1000 Brussels

- The building and the exhibition route are accessible to people with reduced mobility.
- There are some parking spaces for persons with reduced mobility at Boulevard de l'Empereur 4.
- Accessible by public transport, car and bicycle.
- Use the SNCB code on your online ticket to buy a Discovery Ticket and travel to Brussels-Central and back with a 50% discount.





Celebrating Toots 100 in Brussels

From 22 April onwards, Brussels will be celebrating the 100th birthday of Toots Thielemans. It will be a comprehensive, diverse and fitting tribute to the Brussels jazz icon who passed away in 2016. On the programme are lots of concerts, an exhibition, and above all, plenty of memories and discoveries.

Huguette Thielemans, Toots' widow, the Private Toots Thielemans Foundation and the Brussels-Capital Region have joined forces and contacted dozens of partners and organisations. The result is a balanced programme.

“Hosting major events in Brussels is of the utmost importance for making our region more tourist-friendly and boosting our image. That’s why I am particularly pleased, together with my colleague Sven Gatz, to have given the green light for a series of events, including numerous concerts, a major exhibition and a conference, spread over four months and dedicated to the centenary of the birth of iconic Belgian and international artist Toots Thielemans.”

-Rudi Vervoort, Minister-President of the Brussels-Capital Region

On 22 April 2022, the unique experiential exhibition “Toots 100. The sound of a Belgian Legend” will open. At the exhibition, which will run until 31 August at KBR, the unique sounds of Toots’ harmonica will come to life.

“I have been looking forward to attending this unique exhibition on Toots Thielemans for a long time. Thanks to the collaboration between the Musical Instruments Museum, to which Toots left his eleven musical instruments, and the Royal Library of Belgium, whose Music Department was entrusted with the care of Toots’ personal archive, including all his musical documents, this exhibition about Toots will be one of the highlights of the Toots Year 2022. You do not want to miss it!”

- Sven Gatz, Minister of the Government of the Brussels-Capital Region, responsible for the Image of Brussels

This will be followed a week later by a unique concert at BOZAR. After all, Friday 29 April 2022 is what would have been Toots’ 100th birthday. The Brussels Jazz Orchestra, and the Metropole Orchestra with Philip Catherine, Kenny Werner, Grégoire Maret, Tutu Pouane, along with Claudio and Ivan Lins will take you on a journey through the life of Toots. His musical friends will be interpreting his extensive body of work with new arrangements.

This will be the start of a proper birthday weekend in Brussels. On Saturday 30 April, in cooperation with Vlamo, brass bands and orchestras from all over Flanders will be descending upon the Mont des Arts, Place de la Monnaie, Place de la Bourse and Place Sainte-Catherine. They will be performing their own repertoire, supplemented by some special adaptations of Toots’ songs. In the evening, you’ll be treated to Jazz Station’s “Toots Revisited”, with music by Toots in arrangements by his former pianist and friend Michel Herr. On the afternoon of Sunday 1 May, the Toots concerto (written by Roland Schoelinck) will take place at the Brussels Conservatory.

There will also be extra activities, exhibits, walks and tours throughout the weekend that will ensure that Toots’ music and personality will be heard, seen and felt everywhere.

After the birthday weekend, an impressive list of tribute activities has been scheduled. The Brussels Jazz Weekend, for instance, will be paying tribute to Toots on 27, 28 and 29 May with a free programme in various squares in the centre of the capital.

And on Friday 1 July, the opening day of the Brosella festival will be dedicated to its spiritual father. Brosella will be held again this year at the beautiful Théâtre de Verdure near the Atomium on 1, 2 and 3 July.

Of course, Toots will also be celebrated in the neighbourhood where he grew up. On Wednesday 20 July, there will be a grand Bluesette flute concert in Place du Jeu de Balle in the Marolles. This will take place during Bal National, the popular festival on the eve of Belgium’s National Day. The next day, on Thursday 21 July, Resto National will be serving some of Toots’ favourite dishes on the square where his parents once ran a café and where, as a young whistling boy, he began his long musical journey.

In addition, this spring and summer there will be countless walks, workshops, photo exhibitions and discovery tours dedicated to Toots 100.

On the programme in KBR and the MIM

During the exhibition, KBR and the MIM will be organising various activities. Info and tickets at www.kbr.be.

Toots Challenge (NL & FR)

22.04.2022 > 25.06.2022 - MIM

Take part in the MIM's Toots Challenge! Send your best version or interpretation of a Toots song or your own composition that you have created as a tribute to Toots. Your entry will be displayed at the MIM and one winner will be chosen each week. On 25 June 2022, the winners will perform their version in front of a jury and the best will win... a performance on a Brussels stage!

Matthias Heyman Lecture: Toots Tourbillion – Toots' early years in Belgium (EN)

5.05.2022 – 7 p.m. - KBR

Matthias Heyman will lead you through Belgium's jazz milieu from 1920, when the young music genre gained a foothold here, until the 1950s, when Toots emigrated to the United States. You will learn more about the jazz networks that existed in the interwar period, how jazz thrived during the war years, and how despite being only a twenty-something, Toots quickly rose to the top of the modern jazz scene in Belgium.

Dauidsfonds day trip: Toots 100. De verjaardag van een jazzlegende (NL)

6.05.2022 – 10 a.m. - KBR

During this day trip, you'll discover both the Dauidsfonds and the exhibition "Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend". You will get to know the instruments Toots played, the musicians with whom he shared the stage and discover the great influence his sound still has on other musicians today. As the icing on the cake, you will enjoy a lunchtime concert.

Concert: Nathalie Lories, Grégoire Maret & Bart De Nolf

6.05.2022 – 12.30 p.m. - KBR

A special concert as part of the exhibition "Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend".

Colloquium: Toots Thielemans (1922-2016). A Century of Music across Europe and America

9.05.2022 > 11.05.2022 - KBR

The colloquium at KBR aims to encourage research into the many aspects of Toots Thielemans, his life, how his work was received and the multicultural contexts in which he lived and worked. In addition to the academic focus, a special concert has also been scheduled, in cooperation with the jazz departments of the Koninklijk Conservatorium van Brussel and the Conservatoire Royal de Bruxelles.

Guided tour: The roots of the harmonica and the jazz archives of the MIM (NL & FR)

14.05.2022, 11.06.2022, 9.07.2022 and 13.08.2022 - 2 p.m. - MIM

Through the “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” exhibition, you’ll discover more about the harmonica and the rich jazz funds that are kept in the museum during a visit to the Musical Instruments Museum.

Frederik Goossens Lecture: De (geschiedenis van de) mondharmonica in jazz (NL)

19.05.2022 - 7 p.m. - KBR

Toots Thielemans was categorised as “miscellaneous instruments”, the mishmash of musical instruments that you find in jazz’s big broom cupboard. Throughout his career, Toots was its undisputed caretaker. But are there any harmonica players left in jazz history? Who were Toots’ predecessors? Who were his examples? And who keeps Toots’ legacy alive today? Find out during this lecture by Frederik Goossens.



Guided tour: “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” in the Brussels dialect

22.05.2022, 24.07.2022 and 21.08.2022 - 2 p.m. - KBR

A Brussels guide will take you on a tour of the exhibition “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend”. Through image and sound, you will learn everything about Toots as a musician and a human being, but especially about his sound. Discover what makes Toots’ sound so special and how he did it justice in various music domains.

Brussels Museums Nocturne

2.06.2022 – 5 p.m. – KBR

During the Brussels Museums Nocturne on 2 June, visit the exhibition “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” by KBR and the MIM. In the exhibition, the unique sounds of Toots’ harmonica will come to life and uncover an impressive collection of musical instruments and never-before-published visual material. Get ready for an unforgettable jazz trip!

Bart Cornand Lecture: In het spoor van Django - Toots op gitaar (NL)

4.06.2022 – 11 a.m. – KBR

Yes, he was the greatest harmonica player in the world. And yes, his skill on the accordion as a child in the Marolles was legendary. But Toots Thielemans’ dream as a starting bebopper was to make it in New York as a guitarist. How good was he on that instrument? Who were his influences? What materials did he use? And which albums should you have in his extensive but fragmented oeuvre? Journalist and jazz historian Bart Cornand tells you more.

Hugues Warin Lecture: Esthétique et politique de Toots Thielemans (FR)

16.06.2022 – 7 p.m. – KBR

During this conference, Hugues Warin will propose an analysis of the links between Toots’ aesthetic choices and the socio-political contexts in which he lived. As the lecture is part of a nocturne, you can visit the exhibition until 10 p.m.



Toots and Bobby McFerrin

Géry Dumoulin Lecture: À la découverte de l'harmonica et de sa famille – les instruments à anches libres (FR)

23.06.2022 – 7 p.m. – KBR

Géry Dumoulin will take you on a tour of the world of the harmonica and its family: free-reed instruments (accordion, melodica, harmonium, etc.). All the secrets surrounding this family of instruments will soon be revealed to you! As the lecture is part of a nocturne, you can visit the exhibition until 10 p.m.



Harmonica Little Lady

Holiday workshop: Play like Toots! (NL & FR)

4.07.2022 > 8.07.2022 – MIM

During the “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” exhibition, the MIM is organising a holiday workshop for our youngest Toots fans!

Marc Danval Lecture: Toots, Bruxelles et la Belgique (FR)

10.07.2022 – 11 a.m. – KBR

Marc Danval’s lecture is the ideal starting point for your visit to the “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” exhibition: learn all about the inseparable links between Toots, Brussels and Belgium.

Partners

Private Toots Thielemans Foundation and The Legacy of Toots Thielemans Association

The Private Toots Thielemans Foundation was established after Toots Thielemans' death to guard and protect the artistic heritage and support Mrs Thielemans. The Private Foundation can support projects related to music on its own behalf, but may not engage in commercial activities. Therefore, a non-profit organisation was created on behalf of the Private Toots Thielemans Foundation: The Legacy of Toots Thielemans Association, which can engage in commercial activities. The Toots Thielemans' 100th birthday project falls within this association. The Legacy of Toots Thielemans Association collects and coordinates everything concerning this special Toots year and is responsible for general communication.

National Lottery

The "Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend" exhibition came about thanks to support from the National Lottery. The National Lottery is more than just a game. Many players participate the National Lottery for a small amount. Players have a chance of winning and their contributions help countless initiatives in society. Thanks to all who play, our institution and many others can enjoy necessary financial support. Due to its unique model, in 2021 the National Lottery was able to invest 200 million euro in social projects and associations that make a difference on a humanitarian, social, sporting, cultural and scientific level. Playing is also helping, which is why the National Lottery is much more than just playing.

Belspo

BELSPo manages ten federal scientific institutions including KBR and the Royal Museums of Art and History, of which the MIM is a department. These institutions are home to many top-ranking scientists and scholars who not only provide an exceptional framework and research material, but also world-renowned historical and artistic collections. Thanks to the support of BELSPo, KBR and the MIM are able to exhibit two unique collections in the "Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend" exhibition.

The Brussels-Capital Region and visit.brussels

Brussels is the birthplace of Toots Thielemans. Therefore, the Brussels-Capital Region and visit.brussels are committed to Toots 100. The Brussels-Capital Region's communications agency for tourism, culture and city marketing is promoting Brussels as a jazz capital. By stimulating cooperation between various players in the jazz sector, visit.brussels is highlighting the city's jazz scene and supporting jazz initiatives. The aim is to contribute to the image of Brussels and the Brussels jazz scene in Belgium and abroad. Brussels has always been a huge draw for jazz. With events and festivals like the Brussels Jazz Weekend and Brosella, our capital city attracts crowds of fans every year. Clubs like Jazz Station also play an important role. Our music conservatories have for years been a hub for young international jazz talent. On top of that, the Musical Instruments Museum has the largest collection of saxophones in the world.

Media partners

The media partners of the “Toots 100. The Sound of a Belgian Legend” exhibition are: De Standaard, La Libre Belgique, Knack, Le Vif, Klara, Radio 1, Musiq’3 and La Première.



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