

the 'definitive' history of Belgian and Dutch popular music has little to fear from this book, but is certainly a treasure trove of information, also due to the reference section at the end of each article and an extensive 'Selected Biography' at the back.

Despite its somewhat fragmentary impression, there are some interesting themes running through *Made in the Low Countries*, such as the relationship of the music from the relatively small Low Countries to the overwhelming Anglo Saxon tradition, and the way in which music from Belgium/Flanders and the Netherlands expresses a regional/national identity (e.g. the insightful piece by Lutgard Mutsaers about the ultra-Dutch song 'The Windmill's Turning'). Those two themes often intertwine in this book, especially in the article by Geert Buelens about the language in which artists from the Low Countries sing. Dutch has never become an international pop song language and that is partly due to the morphology of the language itself – even according to those who have had the most success with it.

Still, it is possible for Flemish and Dutch artists to create masterpieces in their mother tongue, as proven by Raymond van het Groenewoud, born and bred in Brussels of Dutch parentage. He is interviewed by Geert Buelens at the end of this informative book. In that piece, which is well worth reading, the singer-songwriter is compared to Elvis Costello ('I don't really understand him [...] he comes across as academic', Van het Groenewoud responds) and Serge Gainsbourg. What Van het Groenewoud has to say about the latter, might possibly contain the key to making good music: 'He removed the pompous aspects of the genre he came out with. He just did what he felt like doing [...].'

And yes, that might even be *dancing about architecture*.

PIETER COUPÉ

Translated by Scott Rollins

Lutgard Mutsaers and Gert Keunen (eds), *Made in the Low Countries. Studies in Popular Music*, Routledge Global Popular Music Series, New York/London, 2018, 229 pp.
www.globalpopularmusic.net

More Than Ideal Grandchildren

The Jussen Brothers

The impressive success enjoyed by the Dutch piano brothers Jussen has many sources, aside from the fact of the quality of their playing. In some respects their careers resemble those of every young exceptionally gifted musician. Born in 1993, Lucas won the important *Rotterdamse Pianodriedaagse* in 2001 and three years later Arthur, who was born in 1996, was voted the young musical talent of the year in the Netherlands. That talent did not come from strangers: their father is percussionist in the Netherlands Radio Philharmonic Orchestra and their mother gives transverse flute lessons. The children, just like Janine Jansen, Lisa Jacobs, Noa Wildschut and other highly talented Dutch music child prodigies, went through the established contemporary channels of concourses, concerts, interviews, debut CDs, media appearances, music awards, plus lessons from a foreign celebrity (in their case Maria-João Pires).

In the Jussen brothers' case, other influences were also factors, some of which were very Dutch while others much more archetypal. Two great talents in a single family just happens to attract more attention than one and elicits stronger sentiments than two people from different families. When their first CD was released with great fanfare in 2010, containing works by Beethoven and on which the brothers could be heard playing both separately and together, it provoked strong feelings among quite a few of those who bought the album (at the time I was working in a CD store) reminiscent of grandmothers watching their grandchildren shine in the local children's choir (I am not exaggerating). The thing that both reinforced as well as put those emotions into perspective, was the fact that despite their talent and entrance into the bigtime music world, the teenagers were able to maintain



The Jussen Brothers

a youthful candour and not get too big for their boots. Though it would appear Lucas and Arthur regularly receive fashion tips on how to dress, they still (along with their managers perhaps) succeed in giving the impression of just being themselves and not bothering with creating any image. Moreover, their musical star is rising at a time when classical music appears to be attracting a diminishing audience, most of whom would appear to be old people. (The latter was also true to a certain degree seventy years ago, but due to the ascent of youth culture and the changing relations between the older and younger generation, anything not directly geared to a young audience these days is sometimes made into a problem.)

In that context two extremely talented adolescents who excel at classical music are a godsend to the music industry. An added attraction for the business aspect is the brothers' apparently effortless willingness to go along with the current demand of presenting a smooth image in the media. Practically all their new CD releases (after Beethoven, CDs followed with Schubert, Mozart, French music, and most recently with music by Saint-Saëns, Poulenc and Fazil Say) were marked by guest performances in *The World Keeps Turning*, a very popular television programme in the Netherlands.

The Jussen brothers' repertory is partially made up of well-known works for two pianos and four hands, by such composers as Mozart, Fauré, Poulenc and Saint-Saëns. Despite that degree of predictability they cannot be considered narrow-minded pianists. They were invited by the Holland Festival, that programmes a great deal of contemporary music, to perform Stockhausen's *Mantra*. Furthermore, they were able to discuss their performance at length in a popular TV talk show in which the interviewer did not half-jokingly dismiss the music as difficult and elitist. The brothers considered it expressive music they believed in; that belief was something they wanted and were able to express, first on TV, afterwards in concert. And so it does not come as a complete surprise that Dutch contemporary composer Theo Loevendie (born in 1930) wrote a piece especially for them entitled *Together*.

The brothers' CDs exhibit a clear development: from a certain hesitation in the interpretation of

Beethoven to a resolute blend of robustness and refinement in the French compositions. And even though the albums are good, like so many artists, their playing is also more exciting in front of an audience than in a studio.

The brothers also have active solo careers. The older of the two is more fiery and classical. I have not yet heard them in recitals, but in piano concerts (for the time being they are limiting themselves to the iron repertoire) they both love to accentuate the expression of detail (the influence of Pires?) and appear to regard lyricism more important than architecture. When they play as soloists there is a slight deviation from the way in which they perform as a duo, where a certain degree of regularity is clear cut and inevitable but in which their familiarity with the classical repertoire enables them to give it more surprise and nuance.

The brothers' fame is starting to make international inroads. On a number of occasions, they have accompanied the members of the Dutch royal family on state visits. True, their first CD was released on the international label DGG, but only in the Netherlands. The fact this very quickly changed speaks volumes.

EMANUEL OVERBEEKE

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Politics

For the 'Ordinary' Dutch Citizen

The Third Government Led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte

General elections were held in the Netherlands on 15 March 2017; the new government took office on 26 October 2017. After more than 200 days of negotiation – the longest cabinet formation process ever in the Netherlands – Mark Rutte presented his third cabinet. It is a government with a completely different make-up from the previous two.

Mark Rutte himself is a member of the centre-right VVD party, which has been the largest party