Press kit - Exhibition Toots 100

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On 22 April 2022, KBR (Royal Library of Belgium) and the MIM 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.

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

This 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.
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