



InCognito

For your monthly study-related needs and feeds.

February 2014

Suggestions, feedback or comments? Let us know at newsletter.cognito@gmail.com.

A note from the newsletter committee

Beloved members,

Now that the thunderstorm of the holidays has passed, we all survived "Blue Monday" and we are all finally used to waking up early and working all day again, February might be considered the most boring month of the year. Cold, chilly, grey. Or maybe you're going to start your internship this month, which might be even

more depressing. Now, we offer the perfect remedy: a few hours of enjoyment, warmth and feel-good. And all this, from behind your own warm spot behind the computer, and, for free! So take your moment, make a cup of warm tea and allow yourself to enjoy the little things in life.

Cheers,
Annemarie

ABC Journal

BREAKING NEWS!

The Editorial Board of the ABC Journal is glad to announce that the first issue of the ABC Journal is complete! Of course this calls for a celebration! The release party will be on Tuesday February 18th, 21:00 at Kriterion. There will be a couple of free drinks for everybody attending. We're looking forward to see you all there!

A week ago, I saw a friend posting a map of Manhattan on Facebook with the locations of famous stars living in Manhattan. For example, Leonardo di Caprio lives in Tribeca (lower West side of Manhattan) and Bono of U2 lives next to Central Park. Another example of craziness in this city: You could possibly be the neighbor of a rockstar. Enthusiastic I searched for my place on the map, but unfortunately, no famous actor or rockstar lived close to my place. Although, I was satisfied having a direct subway commute of fifteen minutes to Justin Timberlake :-)

Seeing this map reminds me of the conversation I had with Jet, a graduate student at City University of New York. She told me about her plan to meet a famous scientist every two weeks. That sounds impossible if you are planning on staying here for at least four years, but there are a lot of well known scientists in this area. And if you think you've met everyone here, you can continue by taking a train to Princeton, Harvard or Yale.

Rockstars of science live here. Not around the corner of your place, but around the corner of the suite where you are working on your thesis. Joseph LeDoux, Anthony Movshon, and Elizabeth Phelps are just a few steps away. Or do you want to practice your Dutch? Take the train to Princeton and try to meet Robbert Dijkgraaf. These people are as accessible as your supervisor and also email back in one day. Meeting rockstars has never been so easy! Now I only need to find the guts...

AGENDA

Drinks @ CREA

Every Tuesday, 21:00-late

ABC lecture: Prof. Simon Fisher
4 February, 16:00-17:00,
REC M 1.02 ([website](#))

Lecture by Prof. Simon Fisher, Director of the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics & Professor of Language and Genetics at the Donders Institute, on decoding the genetics of speech and language.

PhD information meeting

6 February, 19:00-21:00,
SP C0.05 ([website](#))

Information meeting about becoming a PhD at the UvA. PhD-students from every graduate school of the faculty will be present.

Cognito Valentine's Party

14 February, 20:00,
Location TBA

Cognito's Board has lined up a series of talks on the science of love, followed by drinks and dancing organised by the Social Committee.

ABC Journal release party

18 February, 21:00,
Kriterion

Launch of the first issue of the ABC journal.

Post-graduation meeting

25 February, 15:00-20:00,
SP D1.115/D1.116

What are you going to do when you finish your degree? Former RMBCS students will provide talks and presentations about their career, both inside and outside the academic world, to help you prepare for life after the master's programme.

Cognito's general member's meeting (ALV)

25 March, 18:30,
CREA

Want to help Cognito settle as a real student's association (while enjoying a beer)? Then come to the first general member's meeting!

Brains Abroad Rockstars around the corner

In *Brains Abroad*, we ask a RMBCS student who is doing a research project abroad to write about their experiences. This month's *Brains Abroad* is written by Eline Kupers, who is doing her research project at New York University.

New York City. A city which can offer you (as far as I've seen now) everything you can imagine. The rush, the food, the business, the fashion. You name it. Fried Coca Cola? Dancing shows in the subway? Bars with an entrance fee of \$1000? It's here. Two months ago, I started my second research internship at New York University: A nerve center of knowledge and academics. Yes,

besides craziness, NYC offers serious science too.

At NYU, people breathe science. This does not mean that everybody is present at the lab 10 hours a day. No, these scientist have the same weird working schedules as we students. I mean that you can fill your whole day with attending talks, seminars and lectures. You get a direct reply on your emails. I'm talking about the fact that people are more than willing to help in their own time if you have a question or want to learn something new. And if you talk back, you directly get invited to their meetings. Or if you're saying something they think is interesting: a free lunch.



Photo by Sjoukje van der Stegen. Eline in NYC.

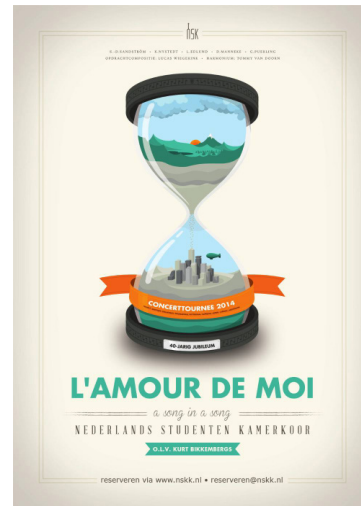
Incognobel Prize

Our third Incognobel nomination is in the category music, right in time for all the music-related courses in the upcoming semester! At first glance our nominee can come across as modest, but when you get closer and, dare I say, strike the right chord she'll open up all right. I am, of course, talking about or own very awesome musically inclined Myrte Vos!

I had to miss half of a lecture for the audition, but it was absolutely worth it: I'm a soprano in the Dutch Student Chamber Choir (Nederlands Studenten Kamerkoor, NSK)! It's a yearly project spanning two months of intense rehearsals and two weeks of concerts all over the Netherlands. I never had the time or opportunity to participate before - it's quite a commitment - but I really, really wanted to. The NSK is just about the highest standard you can reach as a Dutch student with a love for choral music.

There are 32 of us - 8 in each voice group - and we come from all over the Netherlands and from all kinds of backgrounds. One of my fellow sopranos is doing a MA in Book and Manuscript studies, and there's a math student from Leiden who can sing so low, it's no longer a

tone but a fearful rumbling, like a submarine earthquake. Our glorious leader is conductor, composer and Flemish Viking Kurt Bikkembergs, a man possessed of imposing girth, rugged facial hair and fierce disposition. His directions, delivered in rapid-fire Flemish and usually at a bellow, regularly reduce us to helpless laughter - but also to sober resolutions to study harder, because we've only three rehearsal weekends plus a full rehearsal week to get ten pieces of considerable difficulty down pat. The NSK is committed to performing modern classical music, including a commissioned piece by an up-and-coming Dutch composer: it's not bewildering experimental stuff, but neither is it simple, certainly not to perform. This year's theme is "a song in a song", meaning that the pieces we sing are inspired by, grafted on, or have straight-up cannibalised pre-existing music. A French folk ditty; a Scottish clan song (in which I impersonate a bagpipe); a Lied by Mahler transcribed for 16-part choir; a devilishly tricky piece based on a Dutch book inspired by a gorgeous motet by 16th-century composer Josquin des Pres citing an equally lovely hymn by 14th-century



Poster for this year's NSK

composer Johannes Ockeghem. At the time of writing, we've just had our second rehearsal weekend and I am *loving* it. The music's fantastic, the people are wonderful and the feeling of singing, of creating with others a sound so much more complex and beautiful than I could ever make alone always gives me an incredible rush. I can't wait to start the concert tour, and share the fruits of our labours with others!

This sounds like an amazing opportunity, congratulations Myrte! Now, do you want to hear Myrte and her newfound band of choral companions in action? Well, you can! Surf to nssk.nl or concertgebouw.nl for tickets, or approach Myrte after STiCS to get one for cheaps!



Photo by Erik Busstra. The NSKK, with Myrte second on the left, second row from the top.

BIRTHDAYS

Ben Brandenburg
3 February

Yara van Someren
3 February

Thomas Meindertsma
13 February

Marthe Smedinga
13 February

Cato Drion
15 February

Michael Giffin
15 February

Ceyrinne Pellikaan
17 February

Mate Bulath
20 February

Kyra Lubbers
20 February

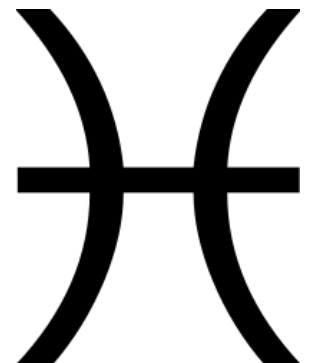
Scott Elliot
23 February

David Iñaki López
27 February

HOROSCOPE

Pisces

18 February - 20 March



Pisces have some great qualities for aspiring scientists: reasonable, yet somewhat artistic, which allows them to think out of the box. The large project you've just started may turn out very successful, provided you are prepared to step out of your comfort zone. Your natural shyness (for which, as usual, the amygdala and hippocampus are probably to blame...) may lead you to keep your brilliant ideas to yourself - which is a shame for everyone, not in the least yourself. So try and activate Broca's region, eloquently formulate your ideas, and speak up!

ABC's Night of the Brain

Column by Nelson Mooren

January saw the start of the Year of the Brain, launched by Dick Swaab at the ABC Night of the Brain, opened by Damiaan Denys. The Brakke Grond, in the heart of the theatre district on the Nes, was home to brainy brain enthusiasts – quite a lot of them being our fellow students and professors. This made for a night of socialising and getting in touch again after the holidays. The main theatre room was home to short lectures, discussion sessions, poetry and more, while the rest of the venue was furnished with an art exhibit, serious gaming and generally providing the more hands-on part of the night. For me, personally, the highlights of the evening were the brain food and *the wearable*, a contraption made for simulating a psychosis.

Let's start with the brain food. Most of us are accustomed to eating meat, muscle tissue mostly, but organs? That's a different matter, and when it comes to the idea of eating brains most people will cringe at the idea, except zombies of course... There were two types of hors d'oeuvres: a sausage made of veal brain served with some salad, and marinated veal brain with egg served in an eggshell. I had the brain with egg, and it was very interesting.

The texture is smooth, if you have ever handled a brain this comes as no surprise, and it had a very mild taste, kind of nutty. If this has sparked your interest, have a look at this month's Food for Thought, and if you dare: head over to your local butcher, see if you can get your hands on some brains and get cookin'.

The psychosis simulation started with *the wearable* by Jennifer Canary Nikolova, a backpack of sorts – a board with a laptop and a wii strapped onto it – attached to which were glasses with integrated displays and a camera, and headphones. With the wii-mote in hand some instructions were shown, and at the push of a button the simulation would start. My first impressions were of sensory overload, suddenly there were all these voices and everything I saw was distorted like in a movie where you take the perspective of a drunk person: things were delayed, doubled up, colours were shifted. If you have seen Requiem for a Dream you'll know what I'm talking about. The same happened to hearing and it became difficult to tell which voices were from people around me and which were part of the simulation. Before I was able to get used to this the visions came, suddenly I was stumbling through the hall of

an institute falling to the floor ... and as quick as it came I was back in 'the real world', with the voices and the distorted vision. Now the voices started giving me commands, telling me to take a step forward, no backward, to turn around – faster and faster, leaving me unable to keep up. When the voices stopped giving their commands I decided to walk around a little, to see if there was a space with fewer people – most importantly, fewer stimuli. With the headset that was difficult, obviously. Walking around and trying to take part in conversations was made all the more difficult because at random times white noise blasted from the headphones and the screens showed static, effectively blacking me out. As I entered one of the exhibition rooms everything before my eyes turned white and I had to feel my way around to get through it.

All in all the simulation lasted for maybe fifteen minutes, but it felt way longer. It definitely is an interesting experience that shows what it can be like to be subject to a psychosis. After the simulation was over it took a while before the feelings of desorientation were gone and I felt I was back to normal. I'm not sure if I would really recommend this experience to anyone, but it certainly provides you with a whole new level of explanation beyond what textbooks or personal accounts can provide.

Dr. Incognito

Last month we informed you about Dr. Incognito's unfortunate accident with methamphetamine in a pilot experiment. Since then, he's been able to leave the clinic, but something still strikes us as odd about him. Still, he loves answering your letters, and who are we to deny it from him? On to this month's letter (and Dr Incognito's rather unusual answer):

Dear Dr. Incognito,

Last week I discovered something odd. It never actually caught my attention before, but I noticed that every time I write something (doesn't matter if it are words or numbers) I see them in different colours. It seems as if every letter and number has its own specific colour. I found out that none of my friends experience this. Do you know what it is and if this goes away when I become older? Because I love to see the colours, it really cheers up everything – even the most boring exams become very cheerful.

Colourful girl

Dear colourful girl,

It must be really nice to see all those colours. To be honest, although it's uncommon, there have been reports of other people who experience this too. Actually, I had a friend in high school who had the same strange urge to write every letter and number in a different colour! I remember he used one of those multi-coloured clicky pens, and I have to say, it brightened my day as well! For a while I tried the same thing, but because I didn't have such a magical pen it took too long to switch pens and it affected my results. As long as you can manage switching the colours though, it will keep you happy for a long time! Maybe you should pick a random colour every time instead of using the same colour for the same letter or number. Try it and tell me later which colour you like the most!

Dr. Incognito

Do you have a burning question for Dr. Incognito? Let us know on [newsletter.cognito@gmail.com!](mailto:newsletter.cognito@gmail.com)

Food for Thought

Ingredients (serves 4):

- 300g veal brain
- 2dl water
- 2dl red wine
- 1 medium size onion, chopped
- 1 lemon, sliced
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- juice of one lemon
- 1 clove garlic
- 1 tsp mustard
- a bunch of rocket
- a bunch of chives
- 4 sprigs of tarragon
- a bunch of curly endive
- salt & pepper

This month's [recipe](#), inspired by ABC's Night of the Brain, is poached veal brain on a salad of herbs:

Put the veal brain in water with some salt, to remove any residual blood. Heat a mixture of water, red wine, chopped onions and slices of lemon to a near-boil (around 80-90°). Add the veal brain and let simmer for around 20 minutes. Let the brain cool in the liquid. To make the marinade mix olive oil, lemon juice, garlic and mustard, and add salt and pepper to taste.

Slice the veal brain, around 1cm thick, and leave it to marinate in the olive oil mixture for 4 hours. Wash the endives and green herbs, allow them to drain, Add some of the marinade to the herb salad, and put it on the plates. Put the slices of brain on top, and scoop some of the marinade around it.

Goes well with fresh ciabatta, sprinkled with some olive oil, salt and pepper.