

## **Programme of the 44th Cat Parade. (Sunday 10 May at 3pm)**

### **The stray cats' parade!**

You might think 'is that the magnificent Cat Parade?' when you see those filthy stray cats approaching from afar! Sluggish, lazy or eager and full of kitty naughtiness. Worn clothes and running make-up. You cannot catch stray cats. They make their own parade. But don't be fooled. They're dangerous and you'd better do as they tell you or you could get scratched.

### **Part 1: a warm welcome!**

Fortunately the real Cat Parade is on the way. The city council and the whole organisation warmly welcome you in Ypres. The former coat of arms has been replaced with a totally modern illustration of the Ypres logo. Ypres' youth accompanies the logo and listen carefully: they even made a new song! Ypres today is not just a Flemish city but also a European international entity. And the future is guaranteed when we see all those dancing or meowing kittens in the cats' lounge. And, as always, the jazzy *Cheercats* are dancing in the parade too.

### **Part 2: the worshipping of cats in history.**

We delve into history in the second part of the parade. Isn't it amazing that humans have honoured those cute catty pets for centuries? Cats enjoyed high standing in Ancient Egypt and with the Celts. But cats never did attract as much attention as in our dark medieval times, as the witches' familiar. Is this the reason why witches were burnt at the stake and cats were thrown out of the tower? At the end of this part the roles are reversed: the tomcats and pussycats condemn humans for that great cruelty and hypocrisy! Those who ever crept about on padded paws should start quaking in their boots now, ...

### **Part 3: Ypres City of Peace**

In the second part we were given a history lesson about the worshipping of cats and now it is about Ypres in itself. Ypres is a city with a rich past. But that wealth was often obtained by plunder and bloodshed. Think of the 'Siege of Ypres' in medieval times and the Vauban era. That French architect starved the city to build the 'ramparts': a defence construction that never proved its usefulness. The First World War was fought here too. It therefore makes sense that Ypres should now call itself a 'City of Peace'.

### **Part 4: cats in language and legends**

Our beautiful, rich Flemish sayings and idioms idolise and vilify cats. You will definitely recognise a number of playful cat sayings in the fourth part, through theatre, choreography, dance and interaction with the public. Young mice always playfully show which saying it is. 'Like cat and mouse' is a brand-new illustration with its own story. And can you see 'Puss in Boots' in the distance?

### Part 5: cats around the world

Cats are worshipped throughout the world. Surely you will recognise Garfield just behind the 'street' Cats from the musical with the same name. But there are world-famous cats in Belgium too! Think of the Walloon 'Le Chat' by cartoonist Geluck or the Flemish 'Musti' broadcast on more than 52 TV stations. But the wild jungle cats are very playfully present in Ypres too. This year we fraternise with the Japanese cats also because a group of cute cats flew over from Kan-Nami Town especially to play in our Ypres Parade.

### Part 6: the Ypres cats

In the last part we wave goodbye to all the cats. But not without celebrating first with the real Ypres cats. There are the big-headed cats and the sweet *Snoezepoezen*. We see the well-dressed giant Cieper followed by *the* parade horse (or should we say parade cat?) *Minneke Poes*! The Fools Fanfare is preceding a float supporting a model of the Cloth Hall from which the Ypres Fool scatters kittens into the crowd. He will do this again at 6 pm, from the Belfry Tower. World-famous Koksijde show corps El Fuerte is the cat's whiskers on the 44th Cat Parade.

No, the tomcat isn't giving the glad eye ... yet. But he will, very late tonight ... or tomorrow morning?

### **The burning of the witch (Sunday 10 May at 7 pm)**

The Cat Parade weekend traditionally ends with the burning of the witch. But why does the witch have to die? No-one knows. Only the Grand Inquisitor thinks those headstrong and independent women have gone too far. And any reason is good enough to lead the well-behaved Amandine Van Tieghem to the stake ...

The 44th Cat Parade event ends here. A fun festival around our purring, obstinate pet. We hope you have all enjoyed it.