

Dear Ulla and Poul,

It was an honor to be a part of the Festival of Wonder. I recently wrote an article about the Festival for a puppetry publication in the US called PuppeTimes. It hasn't been published yet, but I wanted to share the article with you just the same.

Warm greetings,
Sarah & Alex

Title: Denmark's 2019 Festival of Wonder
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Denmark's prestigious Festival of Wonder has been an important gathering of influential artists and puppeteers since 1986. Located in the picturesque town of Silkeborg on the Gudenå River, the festival performances take place in venues all over the city; from concert halls to black boxes, from circus tents to school rooms. All of these locations are walking distance from beautiful forested trails, and traveling between venues often takes one through the lovely cobblestoned streets of Silkeborg's old town.

Our company, Alex and Olmsted, was invited by Ulla Dingsøe of the Festival of Wonder with support from the Danish Arts Council. This was not only our first time in Denmark, but also the European premiere of our Jim Henson Foundation Grant awarded "Milo the Magnificent." We were the only company representing the United States.

I am pleased to say that we had three sold-out performances and we were well received. Many people stayed after our shows to share their enthusiasm for the performance and to ask questions about how the puppets were built. One young fan, Ellis Mellisn, drew us a picture of Milo.

We took our participation in the Festival of Wonder seriously, and as such it was important for us to see as many shows as possible in addition to our scheduled performances. On one day, in between Milo shows, we covered 3 miles (on foot!) in order to catch a performance on the other side of town. Among the 14 shows that we saw, each one had a full house. We spoke with a Norwegian family who came to Denmark for the weekend for the sole purpose of visiting the festival. It was inspiring to be in a region that is so supportive of the arts.

In addition to the Danish puppet theaters performing at the Festival, there were theaters from France, Spain, The Netherlands, Switzerland, Germany, Sweden, Russia, Bulgaria, Israel, Greece, and the Czech Republic. Puppetry Festivals in the United States are seldom so international and seldom so experimental. There were beautiful examples of traditional puppet theater, but there were also thrilling experimental pieces that involved body puppetry, rock music, and large-scale visual effects. The range of puppetry represented at the 2019 Festival of Wonder was inspiring. From intricate marionettes to a 40 foot Tyrannosaurus Rex, from a murder ballad to a revolutionary Punch and Judy show, we came away feeling emboldened: puppetry can do anything.

Some of our favorite performances included Switzerland's David Dimitri and his one man circus, and Denmark's Teatret Gruppe 38's "A Sonatina" that took place on an Italian pick-up truck and included a live chicken. We also loved France's Compagnie La Pendue and the two shows that they brought to the Festival; "Tria Fata," a comedic and dark exploration of life and death, and "Poli Dégaine," a riotous and radical Punch & Judy show. We also loved the interactive IMAGINARIUM exhibit at the Silkeborg Art Museum that included puppets, simple machines, and automata.

The impeccable orchestration of this huge international festival that was comprised of 101 events, 90 performances, and 2 museum installations is not to be understated. I wish to praise Ulla Dingsøe, the Artistic Director, and Poul Andreasen, the technical director, who seamlessly orchestrated all of the moving pieces with efficiency and grace.

It was an honor to be included. I will never forget Silkeborg, its theaters and forests, and I will never forget the performances I experienced and the artists I met at the 2019 Festival of Wonder. I hope to return one day.