

A Night With Andersen 2019

So this is it: yet another *Night With Andersen* has gone by, this time the thirteenth in a row. We have joined the 1,773 libraries and schools throughout the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Croatia, Australia, Greece, Spain, Switzerland, New Zealand, United States, Kenya, and elsewhere in the world. And according to preliminary statistics, there were as much as 100,000 children and adults that kept vigil during this special night.

We spent the night in the library and had a really good time the whole night through. This whole-night having-fun was well documented: numerous photos were taken, while all the goings-on were recorded and presented in a short film, thanks to the young team of SOOS productions. We have also arranged an exhibition that will paint the Radovljica, Bled and Gorje libraries in Andersen's colours for the whole month to come.

The event was attended by 16 children and 10 librarians, later to be joined by a number of guests. The children were 12-15 years of age (i. e. primary-school pupils from the seventh grade upwards), while one of the children was 10 years old, but which did not stop him from enjoying the night as much as the others did. Two of them came from the *Osnovna šola Antona Janša* primary school, a school for children with special needs. They came from different localities of Radovljica, Bled, Bohinj, and Gorje municipalities, one girl joined us from the Žirovnica municipality (since she attends our local library at Radovljica. Joining our ranks were also two of the schoolteachers from the *Anton Janša* school, Janja Urevc for the ninth time and Peter Kolman for the fourth time. Now, after they have lived through the night in our company, it is their wish that this becomes not only a yearly but also a traditional event. Barbara Ahačič Osterman and mag. Katarina Peterc, our colleagues from the Domžale Library, also joined us and we are looking forward to their organization of the event in 2020. They were joined by the journalist of RTV Slovenija Tanja Mojzer, taking part for the third time already, and our dear and regular guest Alenka Bole Vrabc, who stayed for almost the entire night.

The night was eventful. We assembled in the tea shop on the ground floor of our library where we sipped green, black and fruit tea or coffee, and learned some interesting facts about tea: it is the second most consumed drink in the world, the first being coffee (and the third beer), they produce it in huuuge quantities in different countries, the most in China (as much as 2,550,000 tons), its leaves are dried in myriad ways and thus black, green, white, yellow and other teas are made. First we tried to guess each other's identity. Since we are now used to do things differently, we made each other's acquaintance differently as well. So each of us filled in his/her own questionnaire first, and then we all tried to guess who the respondent was for each of the sheets. We had some very interesting answers to questions such as »I never leave home without ...«, »I adore ...«, »I'm good at ...«, »I'd like to have ... as my dinner guest.« For the latter, Elvis Presley, professor Dumbledore and children's schoolmates were the most frequent answers. We were also invited to make a drawing of ourselves. If none other, the colour of one's hair or T-shirt gave us the right clue. Thus, introductions were made. Of course, the night would not be complete without familiarizing ourselves with Andersen: we learned a bit about his life, work, travels – he visited Ljubljana twice – and later refreshed our knowledge with the game of *Andersen, don't get upset*, a variant of *Ludo* or *Man, don't get upset*. We did not get upset, but answered the questions enthusiastically and strived to be the first to cross the finish line. And what stuck in our minds the most? That Andersen was tall, skinny, of bright eyes and curly hair, and that his shoe size was 47!

This being *Night With Andersen*, we joined the celebration of H.C. Andersen's birthday and the International Children's Book Day with the slogan "Books help us slow down." This year's message was written by the Lithuanian branch of IBBY and talks about the hurry we are in nowadays. We are often being persuaded that this is the century of information abundance, when rushing is inevitable. But opening a book, you realize that things can be different. Books have a wonderful quality of being able to help us slow down: turning pages and reading, we dive into new worlds and stories.

We made sure that the night passed with no hurry, that we took our time for drinking tea and coffee, talking, thinking. And also for loving looks, smiles and an occasional (secret) squeeze of the hand.

We watched an animated science fiction film WALL-E, viewed spaceships, planets, comets and constellations at the planetarium, learned the location of the North Star ... and talked about kamishibai. Or rather, watched it - Barbara Ahačič Osterman and mag. Katarina Peterc of Domžale Library performed *It's Quite True!* (H.C. Andersen), *Worry, Sadness and Goddamn* (folk tale), *The Water Man* (F. Prešeren) and *A Cup of Coffee* (I. Cankar), thus linking theory and practice. Especially *A Cup of Coffee* made us think: if schools presented this story as a play of kamishibai, children would have much more fun and remember it easier. But we quickly moved on: we formed groups and each group prepared a kamishibai play based on Andersen's fairytales: *The Buckwheat*, *The Snail and the Rose-Tree*, *The Money Pig* and *The Princess and the Pea*. Kamishibai rocks! And the players and their plays were so good that all of us librarians decided to try our hand at it in the future, so thrilled were we by the Japanese storytelling technique.

Another special feature of the night was the karaoke, with us singing the songs by well-known authors in pairs and fours. A little shyly at first, but then we just could not get enough of it until our throats were completely sore.

We even took a walk through the streets of Radovljica and had a heartfelt breakfast at the Lectar Inn. We barely had the time to put up an exhibition of the night events (to be open for all to see till the end of the month) and make everything ready for the reception of guests: on Saturday morning (March 30th, at 9.00 am) we made a presentation of our *Night With Andersen* to all visitors.

We are proud to have more and more people stay up with us each year during the *Night With Andersen*, not only in Europe and worldwide but, above all, here in Slovenia. This year there were ten locations where the Andersen event took place in Slovenia: tgree libraries (Knjižnica Antona Tomaža Linhartaradovljica, Knjižnica Brežice ter Pokrajinska in študijska knjižnica Murska Sobota) in sedmih osnovnih šolah (prof. dr. Josipa Plemlja Bled, Staneta Žagarja Lipnica, Fran Saleškega Finžgarja Lesce (že en teden prej), Prežihovega Voranca Jesenice, Rinža Kočevje, Stara Cerkev in Ivana Babiča – Jagra, Merezige).

Both the children and the librarians had a really great time. No wonder it was our unanimous decision: we are going to have a *Night With Andersen* in our library (and, hopefully, many other places as well) in 2020 too! Fot the fourteenth time!

Read more about it at: www.rad.sik.si.

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