

UNIMA PASSPORT REPORT Materinka Festival Liberec 2025

I was fortunate to be granted a UNIMA Passport to attend the Materinka Festival, which took place from June 10th to 14th 2025 in Liberec, Czechia. Materinka is a well-established international festival focused primarily on young audiences—particularly children up to eight years old—but the rich program of shows and events also appeals to adults and families.

The festival was impressively well-organized, with a packed schedule that allowed me to attend, on average, six performances per day, in addition to numerous supplementary events. I was encouraged and supported in seeing as much as possible, which greatly enriched my experience.

Accessing the festival was easy and convenient. I was provided with spacious accommodation just a short walk from the Naive Theatre the central venue and the festival headquarters. There was also a strong festival presence in the public square directly outside the hotel, which helped create a lively and festive atmosphere throughout the city.

The performances took place across several venues, including theatres and cultural institutions located in central Liberec. Most shows were staged in one of the three performance spaces within the Naive Theatre. I was also fortunate to have box seats at the historical Theatre F.X. Šalda, which served as a venue during the festival.

This year, Materinka hosted a total of 25 puppet shows: 18 by Czech national companies and 7 by international companies. The festival is a notable fixture on the European puppetry circuit, attracting directors and curators from across the continent. As such, it offered a valuable opportunity to observe and compare a range of puppetry styles and to understand which forms resonate most in different European contexts.

The variety of puppetry on display was impressive, ranging from traditional marionette work to shadow theatre and innovative object theatre. Attending such a wide range of performances gave me deeper insight into contemporary Czech puppetry in particular. I came to appreciate the enduring importance of wood as a material, as well as the inventive use of sets and stagecraft that continues to evolve within this rich artistic tradition.

Liberec itself is a charming city, full of traditional architecture, cobbled streets and a welcoming atmosphere. It is compact and easy to navigate on foot, with a good selection of restaurants and small grocery stores.

I am deeply grateful to have received the opportunity to attend Materinka through the UNIMA Passport program. From the warm welcome I received upon arrival at the airport to the thoughtful support throughout my stay, the festival organisers were exceptional hosts. I would also like to thank all the artists whose performances brought so much creativity and joy to the festival. It was truly a privilege to share in their work and in the vibrant world of puppetry. <https://materinka.naivnidivadlo.cz/en/programme>

Carmel Balfe representing <https://www.irishunimapuppetry.org/> www.littlegempuppets.com



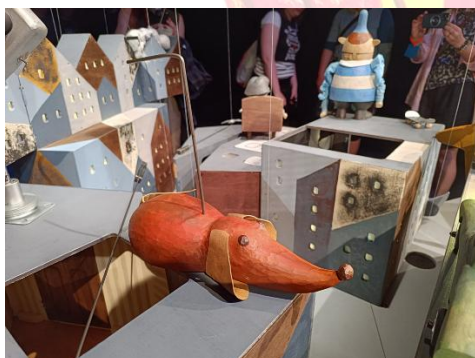
Naive Theatre, Materinka Festival
Headquarters



Festival Performance Spectacle,
First Step
VOSA Theatre



Theatre F.X. Šalda,
Historical central venue



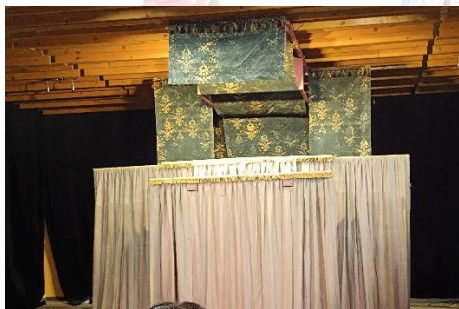
Tabletop and Marionette Puppetry
The Red Balloon
Company : Naive Theatre



Object Theatre,
The Block Theatre,
Company : Ko Koo Mo



Marionette and object theatre
Fabula Sylvertris
Musasi Entertainment Company



Hand Puppetry
Mr. Kaspar and his Goofy Family
Company : Alfa Theatre



Shadow Puppetry
Amarbari
Unterwasser Theatre Company



Marionette Puppetry
Long Broad and Sharpsight
Company : Minor Theatre