

PRESS RELEASE 25.2.2025

For immediate release

The Puolanka Pessimists embarrassed themselves in Northern Norway

The first ever foreign language performance by Puolanka Pessimism Association was seen and experienced on February 21 at the *Barents Spektakel* festival in Kirkenes, Northern Norway. The awkwardly positively titled *Positive Pessimism Seminar Show* was performed at the festival on Friday evening at prime time. Despite the marketing, the performance drew a full audience of 225 festival guests to listen to the teachings of the pessimistic seminar at Samfundshuset.

"We have gotten to know the Pessimists from Puolanka through artistic collaborations and are fascinated by their deliberately distinct approach to regional politics and centralization – themes that sparks the debate in Northern Norway", tells **Astrid Fadnes**, the artistic director of Pikene på Broen, the organization responsible for the Barents Spektakel festival. *"In search of new and artistic approaches to center-periphery and a discussion that tends to go in loop, we were curious to explore what we can discover by seeing these things from a Finnish perspective – and in this case, from the perspective of a pessimist association from the small town Puolanka."*

For the 2025 festival, the theme was *"Remote Control"*, exploring the boundary between center and periphery, and what makes non-urban areas valuable.

"With this as the backdrop, it became obvious that we had to invite Puolanka Pessimist Association back to Kirkenes: What can the remote, Arctic town of Kirkenes, with its rapidly shrinking population and heavy reliance on public subsidies to keep people from leaving, possibly learn from Finnish, pessimistic placemaking? In case the answer would be... nothing – at least we knew they would bring a lot of cool merch to town!", continues Astrid Fadnes, trying to give excuses for inviting the Pessimists to perform at the festival..

The *Positive Pessimism Seminar Show* was made together with Norwegian actor **Ivar Beddari**. Together with Beddari, the Show was written by **Tommi Rajala** and **Katja Kempainen** of the Pessimists during a week-long writing residency in November in Kirkenes.

"We worked on this performance for almost a month in total, and it will never be performed again. The Norwegians seem to have so much money that they can afford to commission such a one-off performance from us", says Tommi Rajala, the artistic director of Puolanka Pessimists Association, wondering about the situation. *"I don't really understand it, but I'm not complaining."*

"I also performed on it", says Santeri Rahkamaa, the chairman of the Puolanka Pessimists Association. *"So did I",* says Antti Rynnänen, the vice chairman of the Puolanka Pessimists Association. *"I just accompanied the others",* tells Katja Kempainen, the executive director of the Puolanka Pessimists Association, who was responsible for the music of the performance.

The next goal for the Puolanka Pessimists Association is to continue spreading the Holy Word of Pessimism with tours in Bulgaria, Mongolia and even Paltamo. However, none of these tours have been confirmed yet.

Before any new tours to foreign lands, the next full-length musical by the Puolanka Pessimists, titled *Karvanoppamusikaali* (Fuzzy Dice Musical), will premiere in Puolanka on July 3, 2025. It will be performed more than just once.

More information

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Barents Spektakel is an annual festival in the town of Kirkenes, located in Northern Norway, close to the Russian and Finnish border, building cultural bridges across real and imaginary borderlines. The four-day festival explores topics related to the High North through contemporary art, theatre, music, debates, film, performances and a bar concept.

Puolanka Pessimists Association is a local cultural association from Puolanka, Finland. Their Holy Mission is to convert all the foreign nations away from the Unholy Optimism. The Pessimists have started their proselytism from Norway.

Puolanka is the fastest dying town in Finland. In practically all rankings, it's one of the poorest performing towns in Finland.

Norway is one of Finland's neighboring countries. It is famous for money, oil, fjords, woolen shirts and whale hunting.

ATTACHED PHOTO

Ivar Beddari, Tommi Rajala, Santeri Rahkamaa, Antti Ryyänen and Katja Kemppainen performing song called "Happy People Song Musical" at Barents Spektakel. The absurdly short song is about how pessimists are the only truly happy people in the world. Photo by Tommi Rajala.

