

Saturday, March 16, 2006 was both a unique experience and performance that brought back a lot of memories for me of Kristina, Minnesota, and my first of many meetings with Benny. Unfortunately Bjorn, Frida and especially Agentha were not present, but I had the enjoyment of Helen Sjöholm again and the BAO (Benny Andersson Orchestra) who are fantastic musicians and a great combination.

Almost 10 years ago exactly I was in Minnesota to see Kristina and to meet and see Benny and Bjorn for my first time. Luckily I knew Jeff de Hart who was in New York at the time and told me about the event, which I am still grateful for attending. I attended primarily to see B&B and along with that I was touched by Kristina and the performers especially Helen & Peter and Helen singing 'Du Maste Finnas'.

Over 50 old and new faces from all over showed up. From Mexico, England, Australia to Japan. Some knew me from my Kristina web site and photos. Except for the Mamma Mia premiere back in 2001 this had to be the biggest fan gathering in North America since "our Fab 4" broke up.

I gave up trying to meet Benny, I didn't want another photo with him or another autograph. But just to provide him my Kristina cast photo that I took in Lindstrom, Minnesota that he asked me for a copy of back in 2001 at the MM premiere. Instead I handed it to Gorel after Lars stopped and thanked her for helping him with the MM premiere ticket in New York.

As for meeting Helen I was much luckier. I first had her sign my Kristina cast photo from 1996 and she loved the photo before we were photographed together. Then to her surprise I handed her the same photo as the same enlargement I made for Benny & Bjorn. She was really touched and surprised. I wanted to thank her for her gifted angelic voice.

The night of the show I almost changed plans with Wayne Buisman and decided to crash the Minnesota Viking's cheerleader convention instead!! Us both being 'leg men' it was very tempting and conveniently located on the same floor as our show. But our love of music lured us back instead.

The actual Dinner, Dance and Show almost never happened!!! Well kinda-sorta-maybe. Our very own Jason Swann is now a magician or arsonist – you be the judge. He somehow knocked his dinner napkin into the table candle and before you knew it - the napkin was in flames. Sorry I was too slow to capture this on my digital and our 'resident photographer' Ron Miskoff was at another table. I believe he stepped it out on the ground, at first I wasn't watching since the attention was at the stage.

I loved seeing and hearing Helen again. I never saw the funny, flamboyant and facially expressive side of Helen. Only her serious side back when she performed Kristina twice in 2006 back on October 12, 1996 at Orchestra Hall in Minneapolis and October 13, 1996 at Chisago Lakes High School in Lindstrom, Minnesota.

But more exceptional this will probably be my first, last and only time I'll see one of the ABBA members singing and performing. It's a shame that we have all four alive and healthy, still cranking out music but not together.

A strange afterthought the day-after was one of ABBA The Movie. Because we were staying in the same hotel as Benny and his Orchestra as that nutty Aussie disc jockey did. And I kept looking for Benny and Helen in the hotel, lobby, ballrooms and elevator.....

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I put together an animated image of some of my photos on this site