

The Art of Play(ing Man)

Application for “Produksjonsmidler / Urpremiere”

Introduction

skjære sale is an ex-man who rejected masculinity for years. Gabriel Skog is the first man they felt truly comfortable with. The Art of Play(ing Man) is their exploration into why that is, investigating how physicality, play, and consent can form the basis of a healthy manhood.

Lasting approximately 30 minutes, The Art of Play(ing Man) will be a dance-circus performance created and performed by Gabriel Skog (he/him) and skjære sale (she/they), aimed at bringing audiences back in touch with their positive masculinity through the practice of wrestling and other *guttelek*.

Artistic content and topic

Weaving together traditional wrestling forms like Norwegian Glima and Submission Wrestling with common childhood games such as Ninja and "The Game," as well as contact improvisation and partner acrobatics: *The Art of Play(ing Man)* will engage audiences through the intersection of rough play and consent practices, of violence and care, aggression and intimacy.

We see *guttelek* as an intimate and interpersonal language of play that is regularly codified as disruptive. It is a type of play that is often kept from women and young girls, whilst both deemed a natural occurrence and a highly criticised behaviour in boys and young men. Boys who engage in this play and ‘cannot control themselves’ often end up seen as anti-social or aggressive. In a shifting world, children who grow up within the framework of being categorized as male today receive confusing and contrasting cultural signals about how to correctly be a ‘man’, particularly perhaps when it comes to dealing with ideas of softness and aggression.

With *The Art of Play(ing Man)*, we want to reimagine *guttelek* as a space where anyone can learn their body's abilities through laughter, communication, and challenge.

Target audience

The performance idea was conceived with Den Kulturelle Skolesekken in mind and a target audience of children and young people ages 10-19. Beyond this, we believe that these topics of play, consent, and masculinity are important for families and adult audiences. In conveying how we protect one another during rough play, we hope to give everyone tools to get physical in safe and exhilarating ways. The performance will be in Norwegian, making it accessible to the majority of people in Østfold and the rest of Norway.

Performance Structure

Using games as a starting point, the performance will be structured as a series of competitions, primarily wrestling, interspersed with other games such as Tag or Ninja. The performers will genuinely work to overcome one another in these games, using their force and skill to outwit each other.

In between the games, they will share rules and future games with the audience, letting everyone in on how to play and what consent practices are engaged. Through grappling, laughter, and tricks, *The Art of Play(ing Man)* will bring joy and consideration to the topic of masculinity, giving children access to tools for play that teach them how to use their bodies together with others.

Artistic Team

- **skjære sale** (Co-creator/Performer) is a trans dance artist living and working in Fredrikstad. They have performed across Europe with companies such as Company Chameleon, Panta Rei Danseteater, and 71Bodies.
- **Gabriel Skog** (Co-creator/Performer) is a circus artist specializing in partner and ground acrobatics, as well as aerial arts. He is a member of Fredrikstad based circus company OppNed, as well as a freelance artist performing internationally.
- **Live Skullerud** (Assistant Choreographer/Project Advisor) is a choreographer with an interest in touch and the politics of relations. Her work is intergenerational, exploring how movement can bring people together across traditional social divides.

Technical Requirements

The performance was conceived with Den Kulturelle Skolesekken in mind. The potential lighting rig is inspired by the rig for Panta Rei Danseteater's *Petal and Tales*. This includes 4 standing lights and 8 battery powered ground lights, that allow for follow spots, and even lighting in every direction with minimal glare for audiences. For a potential premier at ØIT or Blå Grotte, in-house lighting would be used.

The performance will happen "in the round", for a target audience of 80 - 140 spectators. The performance space will be made of thirty-six 1m x 1m Tatami Mats (used for Brazilian Jiu Jitsu). The mats are light-weight and used widely by touring performances in the UK.

There are currently no sound requirements for the performance.

Additional Material for DKS

In collaboration with Glemmen Akropark we would like to develop material to be distributed to audiences prior to performances, so that children can engage with questions of play and

consent before they see the work. We are not currently sure what these materials will be, but imagine worksheets on consent and games to play in Physical Education classes.

Resources and Support

In 2024 *The Art of Play(ing Man)* was a part of the inaugural SUM Mentoring Programme initiated by Helga Aakre. Through the programme it received mentoring by Jonas Qval, and a short pitch performance of the work at ØIT. One outcome of this pitch was a residency offer from Blå Grotte to develop the work on their stage, Speilet, in 2025. This residency is in the final planning stages.

We are also in dialogue with Glemmen Akroparken to develop a residency at the park. The intention is to be able to create the work in conversation with the young people, and to test potential workshop material to support the performance during future DKS Tours.

Alongside this application we have already applied for Østfold Fylkes Kommunes “Søknad om tilskudd til kunst og kulturprosjekter i Østfold - Nivå 1”. This support would include funding for the creation of the work in the summer/autumn. If DiØ’s funding is not received, the funds from Østfold Fylkeskommune will go towards supporting a premiere for the performance.

Scenekunst Support by FFUK will be applied for following potential funding. If this support is received funds from DiØ or Østfold Fylkeskommune would be reallocated to support earlier creation days and cover scenography costs.

We will apply for Dansenett Norge, Scenekunstbruket, and Den Kulturelle Skolesekken at the appropriate times in the autumn (see Timeline for Production)

Timeline for Production

31st March - Applications for Dansekunst i Østfold and Østfold Fylkes Kommune

15th May - Application for FFUK Scenekunst Support

Spring / Summer 2025 - Residency at Glemmen Akropark*

August / September 2025 - Residency at Speil (Blå Grotte)**

20th August - Application for Dansenett Norge

2nd September - Application for Scenekunstbruket Produksjonsmidler

1st October - Application for Den Kultural Skolesekken

October / November 2025 - Premiere at ØIT***

November - Performance 2025 at Blå Grotte****

* Dates and responsibilities still under consideration.

** Dates to be confirmed

*** Dependant on funding from Dansekunst i Østfold

**** Dependant on agreement with Blå Grotte and potential premier at ØIT