

BOYS *WON'T* BE BOYS

— FINLAND DEBUT —



BOYS
WON'T
BE
BOYS

FINNISH INSTITUTE
BENELUX
INSTITUT FINLANDAIS
BENELUX
SUOMEN BENELUX
-INSTITUUTTI

SVENSKA TEATERN

OuluN
teatteri

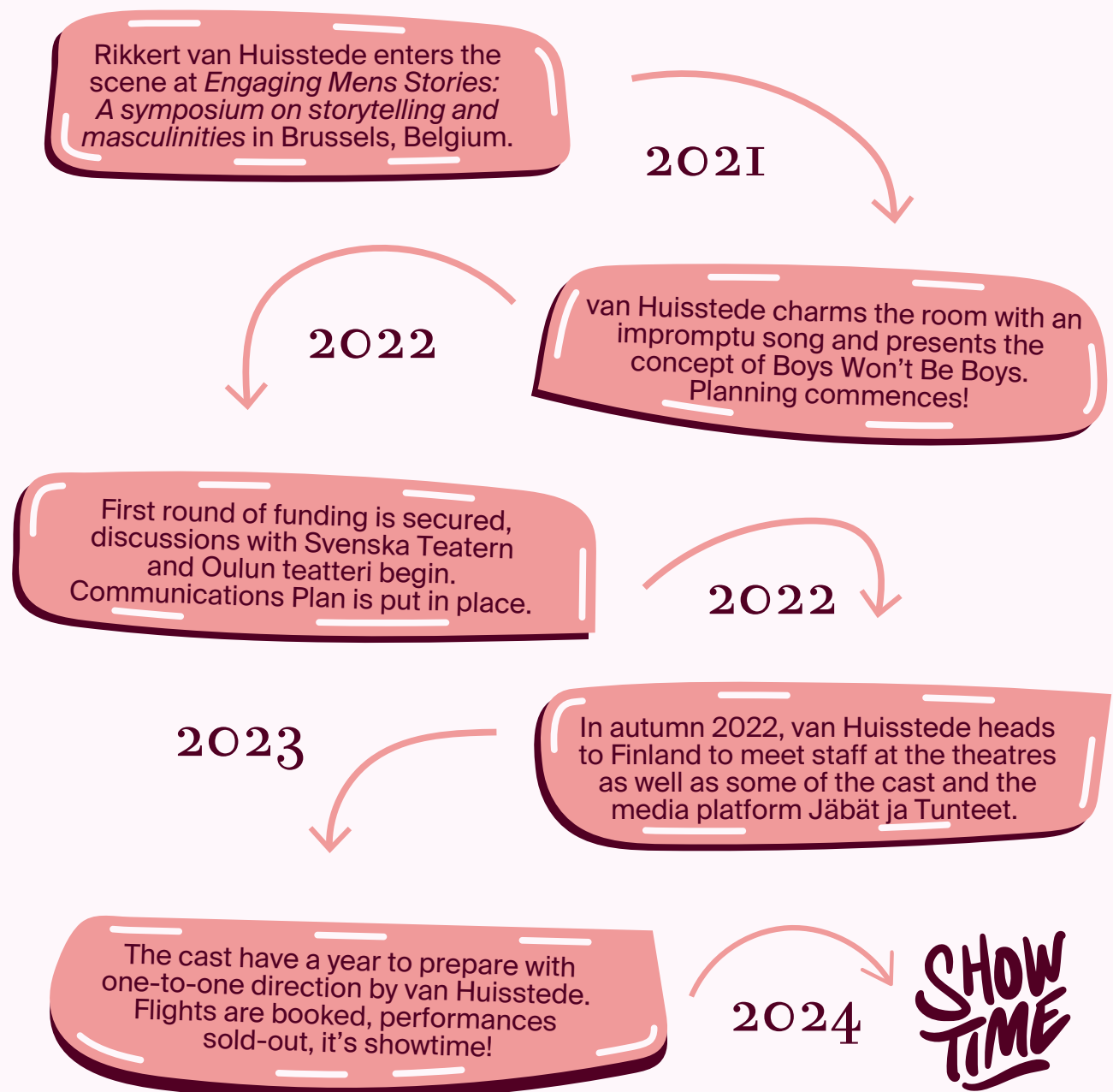
BOYS WON'T BE BOYS

Boys Won't Be Boys, is a **Dutch theatrical and social movement focused on male emancipation**. Featuring over 100 performers, Boys Won't Be Boys has staged more than 200 performances across the Netherlands.

Led by artistic director **Rikkert van Huisstede**, the show provides a unique space for performers to share **personal stories that challenge societal expectations of masculinity**, exploring themes of **gender and identity**.

Aligning with the **Institute's Masculinities programme** established in 2019, Boys Won't Be Boys offers a barrier-free teaching moment fostering new perspectives on contemporary masculinities through cross-disciplinary collaboration between the Benelux and Finland.

TIMELINE & PRODUCTION



PERFORMANCE & IMPACT

The Finnish debut of *Boys Won't Be Boys* took place at two prestigious venues: **Svenska Teatern in Helsinki in May** and **Oulun teatteri in Oulu in September 2024**. These performances were enriched by a diverse cast from Finland, including actor and former MP **Jani Toivola**, multifaceted artist and educator **Julian Owusu**, and cultural and gender studies scholar **Daniel Woodward**, among others.

The production skilfully blended music, spoken word, and dance, delivering raw, personal narratives that invited audiences to reflect on gender roles while offering fresh perspectives on contemporary masculinity. Each performance concluded with a meet & greet, allowing the audience to engage in intimate discussions with the cast and share their own stories in a welcoming, safe space. Following the second performance in Helsinki, the media platform Jäbät ja Tunteet hosted a special *Conversation Club*, where cast members joined audience members and community participants in curated discussions, deepening the dialogue around the show's themes.

Performed in English, Finnish, and Dutch, with Swedish subtitles, the shows were designed to be accessible to a wide and diverse audience. The strategic choice of venues—one catering to a Swedish-speaking audience in the south, the other to a Finnish-speaking audience in the north—broadened the show's reach and impact. This approach successfully attracted a mix of theatre enthusiasts, first-timers, and a cross-section of queer and straight audiences, transcending cultural and generational divides and creating a safe, inclusive space for meaningful conversations about masculinity.

The Finnish debut left a profound impact, igniting important conversations about masculinity and the diverse ways of being a man in today's world. The combined expertise of the Institute, van Huisstede, and the talented cast enriched the programming and broadened the skill sets at both theatres. This project not only laid strong foundations for future collaborations between the partners but also embodied van Huisstede's inclusive approach, fostering a circle of trust and warmth among the artists. As a result, genuine friendships and lasting connections have blossomed, strengthening the creative community between Finland and the Benelux.

**RIKKERT
VAN
HUISSTEDE**



**JANI
TOIVOLA**



**JAMIE
MACDONALD**



**JULIAN
OWUSU**



**JULIAN
BOHN**



**DANIEL
WOODWARD**



**VALTTERI
AALTONEN**



BOYS WON'T BE BOYS IN NUMBERS

2 Cities: Helsinki & Oulu

4 Performances: May
& September 2024

4 Languages: English, Finnish,
Dutch & Swedish (subtitles)

7 Performers: Diverse
and multidisciplinary

489 Audience Members:
Across all shows

2 radio interviews
2 newspaper articles
listed on all the top online
Finnish event platforms
80,000+ reach on instagram

“The concept of Boys Won't Be Boys fits perfectly into Oulun teatteri's visiting programme, which I have started to curate to become increasingly diverse in line with the theatre's new Equality and Equity Plan. The project's critical look at the demands of masculinity is timely and important. In addition, being involved in the project will increase our international networks towards the Oulu Capital of Culture year in 2026.

- **Alma Lehmuskallio**,
Artistic Director at Oulun teatteri



“ Working as an actor in Finland I still often feel like I don't fit the norm and therefore can feel very much like an outsider. Boys Won't Be Boys is very much needed on an individual level but my hope is that it can also shake the arts in general.

- Performer **Jani Toivola**



“Even though I feel like I’ve been quite in touch with my emotions, the experience of opening up about some of the most difficult moments of my life to a large crowd, in a spotlight nonetheless, was truly transformative.

- Performer **Daniel Woodward**



““ It was an absolute honour and a pleasure to hear these stories. I will carry the aura of this on with me. Kiitos paljon!

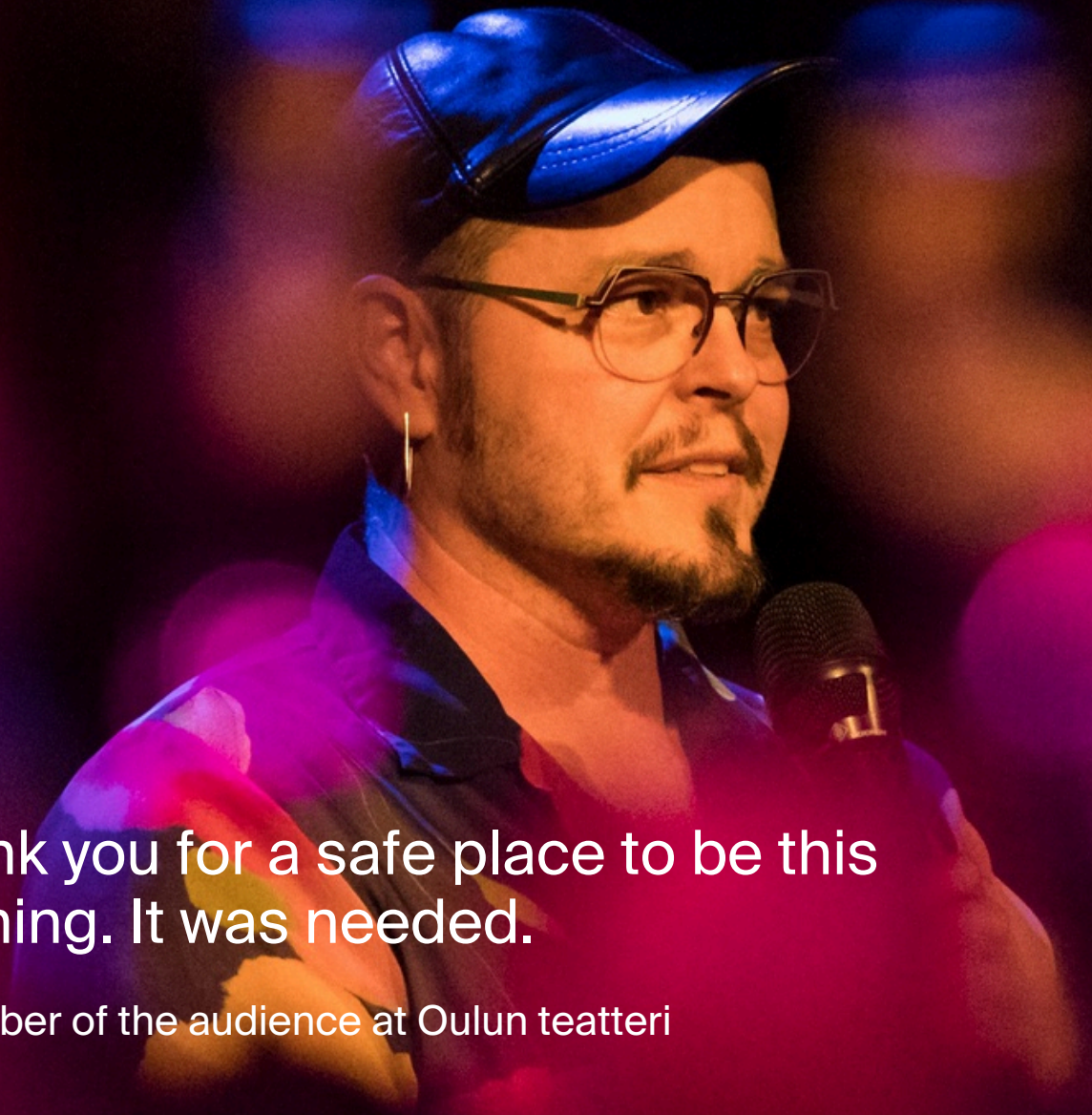
- Member of the audience at Oulun teatteri

““ Thank you for a safe place to be this evening. It was needed.

- Member of the audience at Oulun teatteri

““ Rikkert and the other actors are changing the world, for the better.

- Member of the audience at Svenska Teatern



Boys Won't Be Boys' international debut was commissioned and produced by the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux, produced together with Svenska Teatern and Oulun teatteri.

The production was generously supported by The Ministry of Culture and Education, Finland, Svenska Kulturfonden, Konstsamfundet, Otto A. Malmin lahjoitusrahasto, Netherlands Embassy in Finland and Oulun Valistustalorahasto.

This report is produced by the Finnish Cultural Institute for the Benelux.

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