

# POLKA PILLOW PRODUCTION Martin Tegelj

*In my teens and early 20's I was member of Folklorna Skupina Iskra (roughly translating to 'Folklore Group Iskra'), a Slovenian folk dancing troupe. Over the years we performed folk dances from a number of regions around Slovenia - mainly Gorenjska, Prekmurje, Bela Krajina, Primorska regions. These dances ranged from simple and fun games to endurance dances which risked both life and limb. My Freeform Larp was inspired by my love of the dances which mimicked common, daily rituals, weaving well-worn tasks with rich music and dance.*

*Nostalgic memories intertwined with a simple alliterative title, creating madcap impromptu dances practiced in lounge rooms, sofa cushions tossed, hurriedly and haphazardly and polka tunes stuck in heads for days on end. Polka Pillow Production aims to immerse players, if only for a moment, into a small country village, where everyone knows everyone, early to bed and early to rise is the practice and a hard days work is it's own reward. Enter into this world, and prepare to produce pillows and practice your polkas!*

## INTRODUCTION

You are all part of a small workers co-op. You collectively own the means of production and all decisions are made as a whole. The product your co-op produces? Pillows.

What you will need to play Polka Pillow Production:

- 2 to 20 polka enthusiasts
- 35 to 50 minutes
- Some polka tunes (YouTube should suffice)
- Space to move
- A deck of cards (sorted into their four suits and shuffled)
- Pillows, cushions (or a surrogate alternative like post-it notes)
- Established safe rules

## PREPARATION

Divide your space roughly into workstations where each of the pillow making processes will be performed. If there are four or more players, then divide the playing space into four quadrants (work stations) where each station has a single role. If three, then three stations where one of the station has two roles, and if two then split the roles two to each side.

Divide the deck of cards into their suits, shuffle and place them in each of the quadrants.

Prepare a number of polka tunes. For slower brass tunes turn to 'Ernst Mosch;' for accordion with a bit of pepper have a look at 'Avsenik Brothers Ensemble;' and for those who want a challenge look no further than the manic polka medleys of 'Weird Al Yankovic.'

Divide your party into equal groups and into each of the quadrants. To begin the game, assign a pillow (or other surrogate) for each player to each quadrant for starter resources.

## PLAY

The pillow making process consists of four stages: spinning yarn, looming the cloth, embroidering the cloth, and constructing and stuffing that pillow.

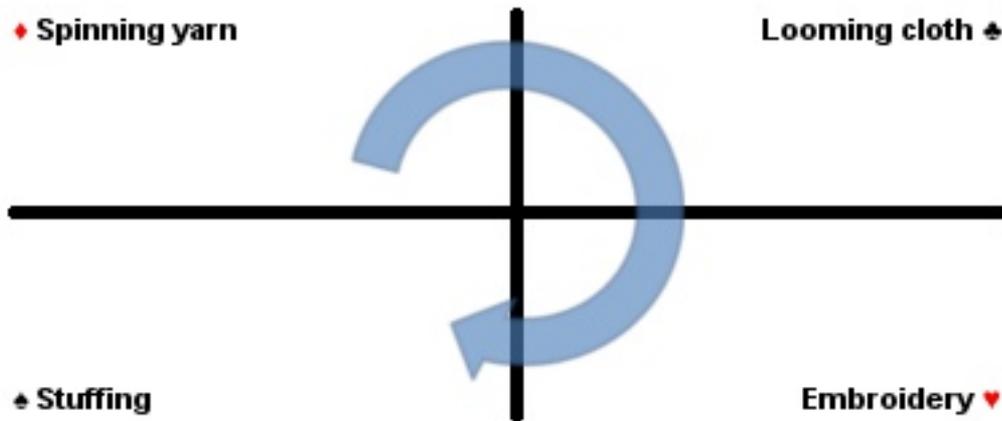
The space you divided earlier will be the workstations where each of these processes will be performed.

The working day is divided into two phases: An Allocation Phase and a Production Phase.

## ALLOCATION PHASE

A single player is allocated the job of the Overseer, who participates as a normal player, but is in-charge of ushering in the new day, ensuring each quadrant has workers and starting production.

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At the beginning of each 'work day' before a song is played, the Overseer splits the players between the work stations. Players then draw from the deck of suits in their section (later to be randomly placed back into the deck). This indicates the kind of worker the player has to roleplay. The face value of the card tells the player how 'hard' they have to work that day or how competent they are at that task.

*For example: Ace = 1 which means a player doesn't have to work hard at all, can loaf about, work slowly, incompetently or inefficiently. The King means a player has to work frantically, trying to produce as much as they can with maximum effort and skill. A joker allows the player to take the day off. They can move from workstation to workstation, distracting other players, doing odd jobs (like sweeping floors or cleaning windows) and generally making a clown or nuisance of themselves.*

The day begins as players go to their quadrants, taking on the roles of familiar co-workers, arriving and readying themselves for a day of work.

## PRODUCTION PHASE

During the Production Phase the Overseer plays a song and the workers begin to mime and dance the actions of their allocated jobs to the beat of the song (bearing in mind their card allocation). Yodelling is encouraged.

When you have completed one of your resources, say like some yarn move over to the next quadrant to deposit it. Just like in a real production house, each station is dependent on the previous group to ensure supply and continue production. Perhaps the loomers are having a slow day! It's going to be a lot of tiresome, waiting around for the embroiders!

One song equates to a single day of work, where the end of the song signals the end of the 'working day'.

At the end of the working day, the workers retire from their workstations, the day is done! Any incomplete pillow resources are left in the quadrant until the next working day.

Just like in any good Slovenian co-op everybody learns everything! The loomers learn to embroider, embroiders are coached in construction. Did you start working at the end of the construction line? Now it's back to the beginning! Each player rotates clockwise and draws a new card from the deck and prepares for another hard day's work. The game ends when the working week is done.

**And remember fellow workers...**

***'To dance is human, to polka is divine'***  
***KD Lang***