

## *Now Presenting...*

A larp by Peter S. Svensson

### **Requirements**

1. A small group of players willing to play performers. One is acceptable. Two is ideal. Three works. (*More than that is possible, but untested. Yet, isn't life the same way?*)
2. An already existing larp, preferably an ongoing one that safely meets multiple times. (*One-shot larps are harder to use for this, but I believe in your ingenuity!*)
3. Permission from the facilitators and players of that larp to engage in surreal meta-activity with theirs. (*Crashing another larp without permission of those involved is RUDE.*)

### **Premise**

The players are portraying a troupe of artists performing and creating art, usually short skits or plays, about the events they've been witnessing: the main plot of another larp. These characters are not omniscient narrators, but exist within the fiction of the Parent Larp, creating art that the other player characters can watch and interact with.

This larp draws inspiration from the Ember Island Players from *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, the Rude Mechanicals from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, the Oompa-Loompas from Roald Dahl's *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, the Players from *Hamlet*, and the Kashira Shadow Theatre from *Revolutionary Girl Utena*.

The characters of this game aren't like the narrators of *Romeo and Juliet*, or metaphorical like the Greek Chorus from the *Legally Blonde* musical. (*That's another larp entirely!*)

While the Parent Larp is going on — with its players being fantasy adventurers, angsty vampires, space explorers or just regular people — a troupe of eccentric artists watches. They could be bards, faerie poets, Martian observers, or just drama students from the local university. Those artists are characters who make sense within the fiction of the Parent Larp. (*Yet likely still be odd, in the way that actors generally are.*) They observe the action of the larp as members of it. Then, in their own digital communications, discuss what should be performed, and how.

At some point during the Parent Larp, that troupe will put on a performance, reflecting themes and concepts they have witnessed around them: holding a mirror up to the nature of the Parent Larp. The players of the Parent Larp will be able to watch as their characters, seeing what will likely be a short surreal, allegorical drama. (*But you can do other art too!*) Then, changed by the power of theatre, those characters will continue on with their adventures, machinations and/or dramas. The Parent Larp will continue, yet no longer the same. (*Is this pretentious?*)

### **Goal**

To create art! To hold the mirror up to nature! To perhaps be a bit silly, possibly a bit strange, mayhap a bit surreal! To entertain the other players of the parent larp, while possibly making their characters think differently about the situations they have been placed in. The creation of fascinating art should be your goal both in and out of character. (*Definitely pretentious.*)

## SET UP

### **Find a Willing Larp!**

The ideal larp for this activity is one that meets over multiple times — safely online obviously — where there are continuing plots and characters. Let the facilitator for that larp read this document. This is such an awesome idea that they will immediately be won over! *(No seriously, this can add some depth to your game, give your characters something cool to react to, and also create breaks for pacing! It is a little silly, but I believe it can be quite helpful!)*

The real world is technically a larp for these purposes, but finding the facilitator to get permission from can be difficult.

### **Create Plausible Characters!**

You now need to figure out WHO you will be playing, and how your troupe makes sense in the context of the fiction of the Parent Larp. If it's a murder mystery game set in a historical 1860s London, you shouldn't be aliens from the Delta Nebula or elves from The Misted Woods of Ya'll'rite. Yet a group of street performers funded by a wealthy nobleman would work just fine. The default answer is "Drama students from a local school," but you can and should get more creative! *(Just also be respectful of the parent larp's fiction and by proxy, its players!)*

### **Become an Ensemble!**

The assumption is that you have one to three players. These questions should help you flesh out the characters you are playing and their relationship to each other: How did you meet? What is something artistic that you disagree about? What is something artistic that you all agree on? Do you have a favorite artist? Is one of you a diva? Does one of you prefer more sensible performances while another likes everything to be as avant garde as possible? What does your character like about their compatriots? What is something they wish they could be better at? Figure out how your characters are similar and how they are different.

Your characters should get along well enough to perform together, but should have enough conflict to create interesting play and drama! They are an ensemble after all.

### **Decide your Artform!**

The default assumption is that you will be doing short plays or skits. But art comes in many different forms, and if you have other talents, let them shine! Instead of doing a play about how all the fantasy adventurers treat death so casually, you could do a dramatic poetry reading, interpretative dance, or a puppet show. Will you do it live streaming? Or record it for later broadcast? You decide!

### **The Name is the Game!**

Together, come up with a name for your troupe. Something flowery, pretentious, and strange is recommended! Make it long enough to stand out, but short enough that you will all be able to remember it and say it perfectly each time. The default name is "The Hollyhock Players of the Spira Mirabilis Theatre," but you can and should get more creative!

## SHOWTIME

### **Join the Larp!**

You are players in two larps at once! This one, and the Parent Larp. You should know and follow the rules of the Parent Larp while also following the rules of this one. (*I believe in you!*) Be transparent to the players of the Parent Larp that you exist, will be watching and participating.

### **Watch And Learn!**

Observe the events of the Parent Larp as your character. Introduce yourselves to other characters if your role in the fiction allows for it. Look for themes, recurring imagery, major events that happen and their impact. Look for characters who seem to be falling through the cracks. They often have insight that others miss. However, play fair. Don't observe what your character could not.

### **Decide Your Subject!**

Once everyone feels they have seen enough, your characters should regroup and decide what to make a performance about. This can and should create fun roleplay and drama as you decide what has happened that is a valid inspiration for your art. The default assumption is that you will do allegorical stories that don't directly relate to the main story, but reflect themes and concepts that the characters watching may find familiar. Alternatively, you may decide to go with a play summarizing the plot so far, certain larps with ongoing storylines can benefit from such a treatment. (*Personally, I feel that a straightforward retelling of an ongoing larp's plot is helpful, but should be a rare treat.*)

### **Prepare!**

The act of in-character coming up with a performance, workshopping lines, figuring out logistics, and striving for your best should be a major part of the larp for you. You are busy making art, so if other characters from the Parent Larp request your aid, be sure to have a viable explanation for why you can't help fight the zombie hordes, solve the mystery, or hack the mainframe. You're not the main characters of the parent larp and shouldn't steal their spotlight.

### **Be Surreal!**

You shouldn't feel required to be realistic in your performance. Shadow puppets, balloons, funny hats, odd pacing, repetition of nonsense words, repetition of dialogue, repetition of sound effects, repetition of repetition, repetition of repetition, all are useful tools towards making your art more memorable and impactful! Experimental art is best for these purposes. They make it clear that you aren't part of the normal gameplay, but are ACTING.

### **Perform!**

Your performance may be during the larp itself, at an appropriate time determined with the facilitator of the Parent Larp. You may do it as a separate performance between normal instances of the Parent Larp, depending on scheduling and pacing. Either way, your characters, who have been taking a backseat role in the Parent Larp, should now get a chance to shine! Be bold and have fun!

## BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

### **Never Script In Advance!**

You may plan in broad strokes, coordinating your performance and planning it during the course of the larp. But to script it ahead of time means that you are not larping, you are engaging in... traditional theatre. GASP! That falls beyond the purview of this larp! (*That difference may not matter to you, but it matters to me, the larpwright! However, I'm just words on a page right now, so I have no power to stop you! If scripting makes this easier for you, I can't stop you! Darn!*)

### **Let Eccentric Coincidence Abound!**

The performance(s) can be allegorical for what is happening in the main larp's plot. BUT, if the starship's captain is secretly guilty of murder, the performance shouldn't be directly about that! However, you can do a performance about a sister who has killed her brother's beloved plant. You've coincidentally picked a topic that coincidentally seems to hit close to home. Coincidentally. Try to have plausible deniability about the art you create.

### **Keep the Fourth Wall Intact!**

You're already pushing the boundaries of larp. This has the potential to make some players uncomfortable. (*While good art does make people uncomfortable at times, there's limits!*) Avoid making meta-commentary. Entirely. It's easy to go "just one joke about larping" and then you've disrupted the vibe of the event in an awkward way for other players. Don't do that.

### **Timing is Everything!**

Work out with the facilitator of the Parent Larp when you should perform. This may be used to create a break in the action so that they may go to the bathroom, plan another scene, or work out pacing. Don't interrupt the parent larp in an intrusive manner.

### **Engage in Commentary, not Cruelty!**

Do not use your performance to mock or belittle a specific player's character. There is a line between highlighting themes that might reflect on a character, and making fun of them in a way that hurts the real human being behind the character.

### **Follow the Rules!**

Just because you're not engaging with the main plot, doesn't mean you can violate the rules of the Parent Larp. If everyone must wear an ID card, your performer will also have one.

### **Remain Distant!**

The actors, while existing in the same fiction as the other characters, should remain distant, staying away from the main action of the game. You take the spotlight when you perform, but otherwise shouldn't become a major component of the storyline.

### **Remain Distant!**

Seriously, there's a pandemic. If at some future point, in-person larping becomes possible, I believe in your ability to adapt this game to that strange method of play.