

LARP- LIVE ACTION ROLE PLAY

-JUSTIN CAPEN

What is LARPing?

LARP stands for Live Action Role Play. It's a game where you assume the role of a character from some other place or time and dress and equip yourself to play that role. Some games are set in historical periods, fantasy, sci-fi, or even the post-apocalyptic. As your character you play out adventures in person and in real time. Sometime this means fighting it out, having heated social interactions, picking in-game locks to get at treasures, or catching a killer. LARPing is a collaborative activity. Players get together in the same space and adopt the roles of characters within whatever game setting they are in. Most of theLARPs I've been in are built off of principles from tabletop RPGs. That means that there are player characters (PCs) and non-player characters (NPCs). Compared to a MMORPG the PCs would be the players exploring the world, taking quests, and beating down the bad guys. NPCs are filling the role of the quest givers, merchants, and of course the bad guys. PCs are the heroes (anti-heroes) and NPCs are the extras and mooks. What's engaging is the level of immersion. LARP thrives on the community's suspension of disbelief during play. This often means costuming, gear, make-up, and most importantly acting the part. It also dictates the kind of rulesets and conflict resolution used to play the game.

What kinds of LARPs are there?

There are lots of different LARPs. There are some active games where you use paintball, airsoft, or even modified nerf guns. Most active LARPs use latex weapons, foam weapons, or foam boffers. These are padded swords and implements that are designed specifically for hitting people without causing actual injury. Some foam and latex weapons are impressively realistic looking, especially considering how hard you can safely hit with them. These games aren't turn based either. Athleticism and ability generally win the day.

There are also passive LARPs where conflict is more stat and rules driven. Sometimes called Salon LARPs, these games happen *mostly* in real time. That is until one character tries to take a shot or a swing at another. Then the fight is played out in some turn based fashion with dice, rock-paper-scissors, or a deck of playing cards. White Wolf's Vampire: The Masquerade is a popular example of this.

You can also break LARPs down by genre and goal. There are fantasy adventure games, sci-fi action games, events about social competition, and others about personal drama and horror. Whodunnit and mystery dinner theater games are LARPs too. You assume a persona and then play along with others while trying to achieve a personal goal. There are even more esoteric other

events out there. In Europe there are short run games that amount to experiential art. These events based around a focused scenario/theme, ie, what it means to be human, a concept or emotion, a specific style of art.

Why LARPing?

It's a game that engages all your senses. Acting out a role in an unscripted, responsive way is great fun. Imagine improv theatre with everyone playing self-defined characters. You get to be the author and the audience. As your character no one dictates your choices in advance. Anything you do is entirely self-motivated within the bounds of the system (which simply exists to assist with suspension of disbelief and ensure fairness). Think "playing cops and robbers", or "creative play", for adults, but instead of everyone being able to dodge all the imaginary bullets if they feel like it, there are rules and a framework for expectations and success.

How to get started in Northern New York?

LARP is more of a niche hobby in the USA than it is in Europe. Games can be a little tough to find. That said, the LARPing community is alive and well in Canada and the US. A trip to Montreal yields three storefronts that serve the LARP community. Dracolite, Carta Magica, and Atelier's Nemesis. Some of the best foam and latex weapon companies in the out there are just a few hours away too.

Ontario, Montreal, and Central New York, have vibrant larps, craftsmen, stores, and clubs. There is a zombie-pocalypse game called Z-World in Grimsby, ON, several vampire-salon games running in the Montreal area, Terra Magica (if your French is strong), there are weekly boffer sparring events at Mount Royal too. The Finger Lakes area has a fantasy game called FLAGG. There is a notable facility in Montrose, PA dedicated to hosting LARP events full time called Faire Play (a long drive, but popular for good reason). There are also Dagohir chapter events (minimal role-play, heavy contact boffer combat) and a large fantasy LARP called Kingdoms of Novitas run by the Mohawk Valley Gaming Club at Vanderkamp Center in Cleveland, NY. That's where I do most of my LARPing, and is the game I can speak the most on.

Snapshot of a Game: About Kingdoms of Novitas

Kingdoms of Novitas is an ongoing game, running for 9 years with the same leadership and storyline. Events are staffed by volunteers and players who love the game and the community. We see an average of 150 players per year, 60-70 per event, almost evenly split between men and women, representing ages 16 to 45. KoN has 8 weekend-long events each year (February to December, skipping the summer months when camp is in session and March, which is terrible weather in

central NY.)

Our game management is focused on equality, with 50% of time spent in-character vs supporting the game as staff or non-player characters (like "extras" on a movie) – the game is broken into 4 shifts, and for 2 shifts each attendee plays their character, but for the other two they work to help the other players have fun – telling stories as a game master, acting as merchants and monsters, working in the tavern, doing makeup and costumes and managing the logistics of the game – whatever talent you have can be applied to making our game run. We take a different stance on PC/NPC investment than many games because everybody spends PC and NPC time each event. There are many games where you pay one price to play your character for an entire event, and a significantly lower price to play NPCs and just facilitate the PC storyline.

KoN is a high-fantasy setting, with elves, orcs, legends of dragons, and magic. Former players and past years' storylines have become lore and tale, retold as part of the game's world. Think something falling between Tolkien and C.S. Lewis with live fighting.

It's a combat game, fought with latex weapons and armor, augmented with a rules system to represent healing and magic. The fighting is a location based system which means that a blow to the arm can "wound" and render the limb useless. Taking a wound to the torso can result in a character's permanent death. If you are wearing armor you may be able to take a few more blows before becoming wounded, but there is a physical trade-off. The armor has to be made out of real materials so heavy leather and steel chainmail are com-

Letter To The Editor

Season ending letter to the editor August 16, 2013

In a season not conducive to outdoor performances the recently completed Fortieth Anniversary Season of the Norwood Village Green Concert Series was successful on both financial and artistic levels.

More donations were raised than ever and our record of "pass the bucket" donations was surpassed by \$700. Since the concerts were plagued by rain that is amazing.

In planning for the landmark season one of the artistic goals was to elevate the performance level. Consequently artist fees exceeded all other seasons.

The resulting programming was awe-inspiring in its scope. The enjoyment, feedback and response from the audience equaled the effort.

Two diverse dance groups were presented, Soul Street from Houston and Danse Cadence from Montreal. Sacred Steel Gospel music from the Afro American Church as performed by National Heritage Award recipients; The Campbell Brothers, and Juno award winner Kellylee Evans represented the Afro-Caribbean-Canadian-French connection. Kellylee Evans's performance was extraordinary, given the fact that she was struck by lightning two weeks before.

Denis DiBlasio exhibited a mastery of tone colors for bari sax and flute. His scat singing was fabulous and as always, the members of the All Star Big Band were up to the musical task of accompanying a great soloist. Thank you Wally Siebel and the All Star Big Band. It doesn't get any better than this.

The partnership with Crane Youth Music continued the next day and 350 CYM students benefited in workshops and the evening concert. With

monly worn. There is something exciting about playing at swordplay in full kit, 20-30 pounds of armor and the exertion it requires. When it comes to fighting in the game: "if you can do it, and do it safely: game on".

Character advancement is dependent on a skill-point system: You earn skill points by contributing to the game as an NPC, by volunteering, and as part of each event's sign-in process. Skill points can then be distributed onto your character sheet to represent skills and magic abilities. Think about games where you get more hit-points or learn a new ability for use in play. Unlike many online RPGs like WoW, KoN is a classless system – you can be anything you can imagine within the setting (a magic user who wears plate armor? Go for it.)

All in-character skills and abilities are up to the player: You have a character sheet that defines who your character is, but putting on paper that you can use a bow won't actually make you any good at shooting someone with it. Real-life aptitude and skills are paired with the parameters and rules of the system to help everyone become a hero (or villain).

SO: what is KoN? 60 people in the same place playing out roles in the same world, each with a unique character background and personal goals, fighting it out against (or running away from) the monsters, bad guys, and plots thrown at them by the staff, for gold or for glory or for the honor of their gods and heroes. It's the best escape from the real world most of us have ever found.

If you want to get in touch with KoN, we are at HYPERLINK "http://www.kingdomsofnovitas.net/" www.kingdomsofnovitas.net.

short notice of just twenty seven hours the five women of this great acoustic bluegrass/newgrass innovators Della Mae was engaged. Ten minutes before the concert it became obvious that rain would continue. The concert was moved indoors and 200 people enjoyed a totally acoustic concert. - No microphones, amplifiers or speakers. The audience loved it. Della Mae is expected to make a return appearance so that many more audience members can share their talents.

Preparation for the probability of using the Norwood-Norfolk auditorium for a rain site for the Suzy Bogguss concert was set in motion. This probability became a reality. A special thank you is in order for Ed Penny, head custodian at NNCS. He made it all work on a Sunday, including the air conditioning. There was a breakdown of house sound equipment. It is not imaginable to see how this concert series would survive without Andy Van Duyn. He figured out what was needed, sent my crew and me back to Norwood (at 5 pm), where we fetched our two Mackie self powered speakers and snake. The sound check proceeded at 5:35 pm. Doors were to open at 6 pm but were only delayed 10 minutes.

We are still in the afterglow of that concert. More than 500 people packed the NNCS auditorium to enjoy a remarkable performance by this gifted performer. People will remember this concert for a long time to come.

There were many more musical highlights of the season and many more people to thank but space doesn't permit further detail. I am currently working on next season's schedule with a full range of potentials. The job now is to focus in on what is possible.

Joseph M. Liotta
Founding Program Director
Norwood Village Green Concert Series

Events, Music & Entertainment Magazine for NNY & Surrounding Areas

CRANE SCHOOL OF MUSIC OPENS FALL SEMESTER WITH FACULTY GALA CONCERT

POTSDAM, NY (08/21/2013)(readMedia)-- The Crane School of Music will usher in the new academic year at SUNY Potsdam with the annual Crane Faculty Gala Opening Concert, which will be held on Tuesday, Sept. 3, at 7:30 p.m. in the Helen M. Hosmer Concert Hall.

"Crane's annual faculty gala embodies in so many ways the School's vibrant musical community, and what it means to our area: The concert welcomes back our continuing students, gives new students an inspiring experience from faculty with whom they will study, and provides all our community patrons with a wonderful launch for the exciting concert season to come," said Crane School of Music Dean Dr. Michael Sitton.

The concert will include works performed by the Potsdam Brass Quintet and Aria Reed Trio, as well as operatic arias, a two-piano piece, selections from two string sonatas, works for solo clarinet and solo tenor saxophone, and

a work for guitar and organ duo, among others.

This event is free, and the public is invited to attend.

"This gala serves to kick off our concert season, by showcasing some of the world-class performers on the Crane faculty. Judging from community and student attendance and audience response, this is one of the highlights of the year for many concertgoers," said Dr. Kirk Severtson, chair of the Department of Music Performance.

For more information about SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music, please visit www.potsdam.edu/crane.

Founded in 1886, SUNY Potsdam's Crane School of Music has a long legacy of excellence in music education and performance. Life at Crane includes an incredible array of more than 300 recitals, lectures and concerts presented by faculty, students and guests each year. The Crane School of Music is the State University of New York's only All-Steinway institution.