

The eXperience method

How to tell a story with a LARP

Baptiste Cazes & Vincent Choupaut



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Introduction

This guidebook contains everything you must know if you want to write a larpscript.

A guidebook for everyone

Before we get to the heart of the subject I would like to reassure and motivate the reader. This small book addresses both beginners and experienced larpers. It will guide you, step by step, in the creation of your larpscript. You probably won't remember everything at the first reading, but small summaries will help you to clarify your ideas and remember the main issue.

The origins of this method

The *eXperience* association was founded by a group of french players and organizers, passionate by the quick evolution of larp. They travelled in different groups of larpers and realized that there were as many game related cultures as organizers. All these cultures don't always communicate with others. That's why sometimes a conflict happens between players who don't have the same vision of a larp in which they take part. So we decided to play a lot and everywhere to discover these game cultures.

We wanted to play as much as possible, but we had to organize too. However, if it is possible to play fifteen games a year, it's not so obvious to organize more than one in the same year. Indeed, designing a larp takes time. We estimate that an average larp in France is designed in a year, organized on 24 hours, for 60 participants.

And still, it's not rare to see ten organizers working on the same larp during 2 or 3 years. From then on, we realize that it is difficult to build a strong experience as an organizer. The young organizer will often learn from his/her eldest ones, according to the culture of the group he/she belongs to. It doesn't leave much space for testing.

That's why we decided to question as much as possible the organizers about their methods, to learn from them, and to organize as often as possible on our part, short games (3 hours on average), for a few players (1 to 6), so as to experiment as much as possible.

This method is the one we developed over the years with the organization. We didn't always design our games like that. Previously, we used a lot of other techniques and I know that we won't be able to present any overall snapshot of the issue.

The Benefits of the method

This is a method to write a story. It's very efficient if you want to design a character-driven story. But maybe you want to write a plot-driven story or maybe you would like to let the players design their characters and you don't want to control the intensity of the drama. In these cases, the method will bring you a lot of good tools but you will probably not use all the steps we propose.

During the designing process of a larp, it's hard to say what will work for sure and what will not. We are often creating the larp gropingly. The method will help you to organise your thoughts and to stay focused only on important tasks. If we should summarize the method in one sentence, it could be :

“First, think about what you want your characters to do in your game and then we will think about what information the players need to be able to do so”

It seems obvious to you? Then you have to know that our brain doesn't work like that. We really often try to imagine the past of the character before their potential future.

The test of the jungle

This is a small exercise, well known by people from the impro theatre. Bring together 8 improvisers and ask them to improvise together. They are entirely free but it's imperative to start with a plane crash in a jungle. The improvisers are gonna be the only survivors. After this beginning, people are building a lodge, telling their story to the other survivors, hunting and many other stuff... However, there is something that nobody does...ever. Nobody leaves the jungle! Unbelievable, right?

Generally speaking, if you enable the improviser to use flashbacks and flash forwards, you'll observe that they will be more likely to use flashbacks than to project the characters in the future. This projection in the future forces people to take some risks with the story and to bind the story in a direction permanently, unlike the flashback, which will keep open a lot of doors for the story. This difficulty to commit ourselves in the story, to close doors and options for the other participants is well known by larp designers. We are forced to let some doors open in order to let some freedom to the players during the game, but if we don't close any door, the players will have to create their own story.

This method consists in thinking about the larp scenario, rather than the backstory. These two terms come from cinema and enlighten the difference between the story that we'll watch during the movie (the scenario) and the character's story before the beginning of the movie (the backstory)

But this isn't the only benefit when you work with a method. Organizing your work is the best way to :

- Not spend years and years designing your larp

This method will make you more efficient. You're gonna be able to think clearly about what you want in your larp and what you have to write to make it possible. You're not gonna spend hours to tidy up your ideas and to think about the next step in your designing process because this method will give you the entire process.

- Be sure that the players are in the right mood for the larp

There are many ways to play a larp, many different game cultures. In order to make the player understand what you are offering and to avoid cultural conflict you'll have to communicate. By taking care of this communication from the start, you'll improve your chances to be in line with the players.

- Not write something useless in a character's sheet except if you want to

If you're a larp player, you probably already thought at the end of a larp that many of the elements that the organisers gave you were useless. It could be a part of your backstory that leads to nothing or a clue you can't connect to anything. As far as I'm concerned, sometimes my entire character's sheet was useless. Think about all the hours the author spent on this work. Isn't that sad?

- Be sure that cleaning the location won't take too much time

And that all the logistical stuff will be fine. By saving a lot of time during the design process and freeing your mind to think about the logistic from the beginning (food, installation, arrangement), you will make your life easier. On the day of the larp, you'll avoid running everywhere and be there to deal with the unexpected.

- Improve your creativity

When you got an idea and you know exactly where to write it in order to use it properly later, you save a lot of time. This time won, you'll use it to keep focused on your creativity. Your brain will not do these round trips all the time between the chaos of creativity and the order of your larp script.

Content of your larpscript

I suggest you to review everything we can find in a larpscript written using this method. You will progressively create each document. Don't worry; we will see in details how to do this.

The to do list

THE main document of your organization. That's the document on which you will write down everything left to do. If you realize during a meeting that you need to find a name for your NPCs, write it down here and come back to it later. Don't ever move away from this list without a good reason!

The fundamentals

This document is the first you will create. It contains the quintessence of your larp. The organizers of the game must know each following point. It is essential that all of them agree on what you are looking to do before starting to work.

The premise(s)

The theme / The setting

The moral issue

The references

The characters web

This document presents briefly the characters of your game. We will see how to define them with a few features. Each character sheet will be written apart. Every character is summarized here with a handful of features:

Need / Desire

Moral point of view

Weakness

Strength

Potential transformation

The game situations

We call *game situation* every scene that could take place during your game. It may be a scene that you know will happen, because it will be introduced by an NPC. But it may also be a scene that players could create and that you want to be possible. If you are an experienced organizer, you are maybe thinking that I'm crazy and that it is insane. You will see that it is simpler than it looks and that it is a significant saving of time in the end.

The rules of the game

In this document, you will write down all the rules you will need. It might be simulation rules or interpretation rules. You can write down main rules and rules that apply only to a few players.

The characters' sheets

These sheets are distributed to the players, usually a few weeks before the date of the game. They contain the main part of what the player must know to play, the point of view of his/her character on past events (it is called *background*). But it also often contains a recap of the characters he/she knows, his/her objectives, skills, *etc.* These sheets are an essential element of a LARP and can be sometimes really short and sometimes very long. They will communicate to the players the desire to play and to get involved in their character. This is the information the player will lean on to improvise the next part of his/her story.

At first, we will fill this document putting in "raw" information. That's what we call the skeleton of the sheet. Then you will have time to fictionalize it as you want.

An orga/NPC schedule

Once the game starts, the organizers and NPCs have sometimes to set up some events. This document explains in detail what must be done, who is in charge and when it must be done. It may be "out of game" elements, like a music to start at the right time, or "in game" elements, like a character who must announce something to the players.

But we think that the schedule of organizers and NPCs must not stop there. We will try to note down here the putting up before the game starts and the tidying up of the area after the game.

The ideal map

This document contains a description of the place you need to fit out for your game. It describes the space in which the story will take place. When you organize the game, you probably will have to change this document, according to the place you will have access to.

The pre-larp workshops

No obligation, but we encourage you to try them. They are small improvisation games to prepare your players to the game.

The communication plan

As we saw it, it is essential to communicate correctly about your game. The players have to understand where they set foot and to be motivated

to participate to your game. We won't put away the communication in the background, but take it into account from the beginning.

The casting questionnaire

This document will be thought very soon in the creation of our game. It will contain all the questions you want to ask to the players to allocate them the best role. You will see that with this method, the questionnaire will be extremely specific to your game.

Bibliography

This guidebook leans on several works written by playwrights or script doctors. I strongly encourage people who want to write stories to read these works.

The writing of a story often obeys the same rules, whatever medium is used, whether it is a play, a novel, a video game or even a LARP. The main difference is that a larp designer has to think about a range of possible paths instead of the novelist who follows just one linear story. But we'll see that if we want to write stories, these books contain many rules from which we can draw our inspiration.

Here is about this subject a text from Lavandier I would like to write myself.

« There is no work of art without system. If the dramatic art is a language, it is governed by a grammar, so rules. And like all rules, they can be learnt. Why be surprised? Except for the basic biological functions, like digest or breathe, every

human activity can be learnt [...] Why would it be denied for dramatic art?

Because the idea that rules exist in dramatic art shocks or upsets some professionals, especially in France. Maybe they think that a rule is equivalent to a recipe or a law. It's a bit more complex. [...] The linguist Noam Chomsky distinguishes the rules of skill, which determine the grammar, from the rules of performance, which determine the style. The mechanisms of dramatic language are similar to the rules of skill. It's up to everyone then to "perform" and print his/her style.

The origin of this reluctance to the rules dates maybe back to the French classics. "The main rule is to be successful or to touch..." says Racine in his preface of *Bérénice*. [...] Indeed. But Racine adds: "... all other rules exist only to reach this first one." This clearly means that there are other rules. »

Yves Lavandier

The essentials

Vladimir Propp. *Morphology of the folktale*

John Truby. *Anatomy of story*

Christopher Vogler. *The Writer's Journey*

Yves Lavandier. *Writing Drama*

Louis Timbal-Duclaux. *Techniques du récit et composition dramatique*, 2004

But where are Umberto Eco, Roland Barthes and Aristotle? Let's say that we tried here to make a bibliography of a few works that seemed to us the easiest to transpose to LARP.



Le charnier des sacrifiés, by ROLE - 2008

Some team working rules

Maybe you're not working alone. There are some rules we should observe if you want to apply this method or another one. They are simple and probably obvious. However, a reminder of the keywords to work in a group is always a good thing:

Back to the fundamentals

The document of the Fundamentals is your main reference. It's in this document that you're gonna write what you want to create with this larp. If you're sceptical about an idea or if you disagree with your neighbor you have to know that in 90% of the time that's because you disagree on the Fundamentals. So read it again together.

Compromise

You just proposed an idea but nobody else is convinced. Try again and find another way to explain it. Maybe you didn't find the right words the first time. The others are still sceptical despite the fact that you think it's the best idea since the beginning. Take some time to think about what they said and come back later to try again. No? Again? Let it go.

Listening

Now it's your turn to be sceptical. The idea of the new guy isn't a good one. In fact, it's dumb. But did you try to think about it as a wonderful idea? Did you try to make it work? Did you listen carefully when he was speaking? Very often, we refuse what came from the others without trying to accept it. Take care of the speaking time and listen to the others.

Respect the timing

You planed to speak about the character of the king during an hour. And you're still here 4 hours later. There is probably a situation here. Find the problem and fix it or let it go. You'll talk about this later.

Forget what you think you know

If you're using this method for the first time but have designed a lot of larp before it's important to put all the things you know away. It's not gonna be easy. Sometimes, you'll be tempted to take your old habits. Take a note about it right now, because you'll see how hard it is.

Say when you're tired

You'll probably be tired at some point during a meeting, and your motivation will also probably suffer. You have to say it to the rest of the team. Talk again of the game together and about what you planned to do for the players. Speaking about some scenes of your larp together, sharing and watching some pictures you already prepared for the larp will help you. If the motivation is not back, maybe you should re-check the Fundamentals. Take it back and re-read it.

Preamble: A method to write stories

During these steps, we will consider that your larp contains only one story. It doesn't mean that there will be only one character. A story may involve several people isn't it?

Regularly, a LARP happens to contain several stories. They take place in parallel to each other. Sometimes they cross, but it's not necessarily. Besides, an artificial bridge between two stories is often harmful.

If you want to write several stories, you just have to start again the different steps from the beginning. Your LARP will be made up of several **stories** taking place in the same **setting**.

I would like to share again (I promise it's the last time) a passage which appears in the book *La Dramaturgie*, by Yves Lavandier, and which echoes our own intents:

« The ones who accept the existence of rules and even admit that they can give birth to great works use sometimes a classic phrase: "The rules, that's all very well but you have to free yourself from them to find your own personal music". This plan is very praiseworthy when it's about freeing yourself from rules you master. But if you content yourself with knowing the rules in theory and if you flout them when you have to put them into practice, you are again in a sort of resistance. As long as the protagonists of *theater, movies and comic strips* will trust only their instinct to create (or conduct) dramatic works, they will continue to play to the lottery. [...] Before doing the *Pierrot Lunaire*, Schoenberg composed in the style of Wagner or Brahms. Before doing *The Young Ladies of Avignon*, Picasso painted in the style of Rembrandt, Manet or Cézanne. [...] If authors would write like

Shakespeare before doing cubism or dramatic twelve-tone technique, we would see maybe more often new experimental masterpieces. But too often, the authors break classical rules because they are quite simply incapable to apply them. »

What is a story?

We could give many definitions, but let's consider that a story is a series of events. This method is aimed at organizers who want to offer to their players a way through many scenes telling a story:

the story of their character.

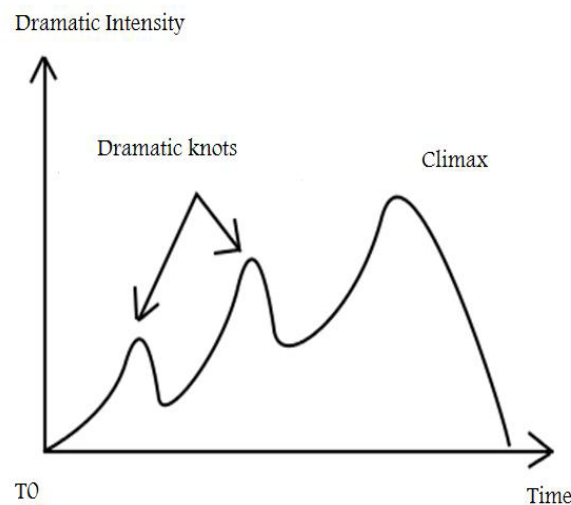
You probably know the following classical model:

First part: Exposition and beginning of action

Second part: Complications (or adventures)

Third part: Climax and outcome

If we want to show a diagram of the evolution of dramatic intensity of a story in time, we could do it in the following way:



Dramatic curve of a story

The objective of the eXperience method

This method was thought to design LARPS where characters won't go only through the climax of their own story. We won't speak about plots, and you'll see that we will lean over the past of the character only very late.

We won't try to design games during which the characters try to understand events of their past. Players will be busy going through a complete story, rather than telling each other what happened to them before.

That's why we will focus on the story we want to offer, with an initial situation and a possible evolution.

Then, we will think about the different dramatic knots that are necessary for this story. Don't worry; we will come back on this notion. We will call these knots: **game situations**.

Example

Examples

Throughout this guidebook, you will see this kind of green insert at the end of each big step. We will use this insert to give you an example and you will see a larp building itself as it goes along thanks to this method.

The fundamentals

Step 1 - The premise

What is your story about? You probably have in mind a story that you want your players to live. Could you try to shorten it in one sentence? Harder! Could you summarize it in one sentence built like that:

Short sentence built with: Subject + event that start the action + Consequences

A young man is gonna do everything to be a pilot and become the hero of his country

A young peasant woman will hear the voice of God and save the kingdom of France

A group of gangsters will try to find who betrayed and kill each other

The premise is stated in one sentence. It is the simplest combination of character and plot and typically consists of some event that starts the action, some sense of the main character, and some sense of the outcome of the story. In a larp, we'll not be sure of the consequences of the event that start the action but we can try to think about the possibilities.

Quality check

How do I know if my premise is working?

Do I have a start and a potential end (far from this start) for my subject?
Is that possible to figure some things that will obstruct the subject?
Is the subject gonna be active during this evolution or is he gonna be only a watcher?

To go further

The hero and the others

In this method, we will consider that in each story that we will design, all our characters are not gonna be heroes. It doesn't mean that they are not interesting characters to play. The "hero", in dramatic art, is the character who is supposed to change during the story. He is also the one that follows the line of desire (we will talk about it later). The hero is often the subject of the premise. As we will see in the chapter about characters, each character can have his/her own premise in addition to the premise of your story.



Beauxbâtons, by RAJR - 2010

Step 2 - The moral issue

If a member of your team makes a suggestion and you don't find a satisfactory compromise, just throw it away and carry on. But if it happens three times in a row there is maybe a deeper problem. Check that the suggestion sticks to the theme and the character premise (we will come back later on these notions). If it is the case, but if you still disagree on the relevance of an idea, it's probably because you disagree on the moral issue.

The author may have a position on the moral issue. It is the deep meaning of your story, what it really tells.

If you look at the following premise:

A young man is gonna do everything to be a pilot and become the hero of his country

We can find different interesting moral issues:

Shall we sacrifice our family for our own ambition?

Does power lead to madness?

...

The premise:

A young peasant woman will hear the voice of God and save the kingdom of France

May become:

The value of an individual doesn't depend on his/her social class.

Shall we fight for ungrateful people?

...

Or:

A group of gangsters will try to find who betrayed and kill each other

May become:

What is the value of friendship?

Integrity is the noblest virtue.

...

An eloquent and touching moral issue is at the heart of a successful story. It is with a really strong moral issue that you will succeed to touch the player and to involve him/her in the game.



Crisis, by Dreamcatcher - 2011

Step 3 - Setting

It's the moment to define the pitch for the players. How do you want to present you game?

First, you'll need to shorten the setting in a few lines. The shorter is the better. But you'll probably write more details about the setting. You can also choose a different way to do it: a trailer, a book about the world or the recent events, etc.

But keep it simple for now. Like when you were writing your premise. You'll have to summarize the setting like a film critic who would like to describe a movie in one sentence.

In 1935, at the Cayenne's penal colony, the daily life is painful.

In a space opera universe, some rebels are planning an attack against the galactic empire.

During the Renaissance, in a libertine's royal court, the schemers are taking advantage of the carnival.

They try to know who will succeed the old king.

You will probably add a lot of things to this setting in the future. I suggest you create a new Setting file to write everything you need your player to know about it. If you're currently designing characters who are working for a knight's order, maybe you want to inform a lot of players about this order. Then, you just have to write it in the document. We'll see a few examples of how to complete this document during the step named game situations.

What is the reason for all the characters to meet?

One word about the beginning and the end of a larp. You'll be the director of the start of the larp and find a good way to end the larp. This isn't the purpose of this method. However the characters should meet for a good and plausible reason. Everybody should have a good reason to be here. Don't take the easy way by explaining everything with coincidences.



Dents pour dents, by Les derniers de Solace - 2010

Step 4 - Brainstorming of references

If you wrote the three first steps in team, you probably already mentioned some references. That's natural and that's why we are now going to spend some time with it. Everybody has his/her own sensibility. Everyone is not touched by the same stories. However it is important that the story you're going to write touches all the members of your team. For that purpose, I think you must share your personal references with the others. Not only suggest them to read or see these references, but also explain why these stories made a deep impression on you and what is your vision of these stories.

Some questions that can help you:

Why does this premise we talked about touch me?
What does this premise make me think about

(book, movie, videogame...)?

What do I want for this character?

Which meaning do I want to give to this story?

Which meaning do the others want to give to this story? Do I understand what they are looking for?

Is it compatible with my vision?

After this step you have still a lot of work ahead. But you delimited correctly your project. If your LARP concerns 60 players, it is possible that one premise is not enough. But remember, if you know how to write a story, you can follow the model to write several. And as the setting is still the same, the work will be easier.

You will be maybe tempted to link up the various stories to the others or to give several stories to each character. I strongly advise you not to do so. We'll see how a well-balanced characters web allows a story to be built and why it's almost always harmful to give several stories to the same character.

Example

The fundamentals of my LARP

The premise: A young man is going to do everything to be a pilot and become the hero of his country.

The moral issue: The values of chivalry are the noblest virtues.

The setting: In a space opera universe, rebels plan an attack against the tyrannical galactic empire.

The references: The movie with a space farmer, you know, I forgot the name.



Espresso connection, by Urbicande libérée - 2012

Plot elements

Step 5 - Characters web

Now you have all the fundamentals and you have a story in mind. You also wrote the premise of this story during the first step of this method. This premise is about your hero. But I'm sure you have in mind many other characters linked to this premise. It doesn't mean that all of these characters are gonna be playable. You'll have a lot of time to figure it according to what you want to give to the players and what you want to keep in control. But for now, your next job is to define these characters if they are important to the story.

You should create a new document "**Characters web**" in which you'll describe all of them and all the information you need to know about everyone. Characters web by function in the story

Every character must serve the purpose of the story. Each character has a specific designed role or function to play, to help the story fulfill that purpose. This function will be the first link between your characters and will help to create the characters web. To create great characters, think of all of them as part of a web in which each one helps define the others. Let's look at the story function of the major kinds of characters in fiction.

- **Hero:** This is the person who has the central problem and who drives the action in attempt to solve the problem. The hero decides to go after a goal (**desire**) but possesses certain **weaknesses** and **needs** that hold her back from success. All the other characters in the story represent an opposition or an alliance with the hero or some combination of the two.

- **Opponent:** The opponent will try to hold the hero back from her desire by attacking her weakness (we'll talk about it later). Pay attention: The desire of the opponent is not to keep the hero far from her desire. She shouldn't be a robot who hates the hero because she is a villain. She has a desire and a goal too. Often -or should I say ideally- she follows the same line of desire than the hero. That's why

they are in conflict. The relationship between the hero and the opponent is the single most important relationship in the story. The large issues and themes of the story will appear easily by working on the conflict between these two characters.

By the way, don't think about the opponent as someone the hero hates. She may be or may not be. The opponent is simply the person on the other side. She can be a nicer person than the hero and more moral, or even the hero's lover or friend.

- **Ally:** The ally is the hero's helper. The ally also serves as a sounding board, allowing everyone to hear the values and feelings of the hero. She also shoots the opponent in the back 5 minutes before the end of the movie. Usually, the ally's goal is the same as the hero's but occasionally, the ally has a goal of his own.

- **Fake ally/Opponent:** In a disney movie she reveals herself at the minute 56. She can also be one of the most complex character in a story because she is usually torn by a dilemma.

- **Fake opponent/Ally:** This character appears to be fighting the hero but he is actually the hero's friend. She is not as common as the fake ally/opponent because plot comes from opposition, especially opposition that is hidden under the surface.

- **Subplot character:** The subplot character is one of the most misunderstood in fiction. Most writers think of this character as the lead in the second story line. But that is not a true subplot character. The subplot character has a very precise function in a story and it involves the comparative method. The subplot is used to contrast how the hero and a second character deal with the same problem in slightly different ways. Through comparison, she helps defining the hero. It's easy to understand this concept by thinking of an american TV series like Friends for example. You'll obtain a comparison between the stories of your larp if the stories have the same moral issue. (If you understood this last sentence, a wonderful world should appear in front of you.)

To go further

The opponent

Opponents will help the hero to define herself and to find the way to change through the story. These relationships are essential. A character is defined by who she is but also by who she is not. Conflicts and opposition are the fuel of your story.

The hero and the opponent are in opposition about the moral issue and their moral values. But their differences will be more obvious if they look like each other on some other things.

Last but not least, think about placing the hero not far from the opponent. If the two characters dislike each other, they will probably try to avoid the other one. If they are struggling with the same situation, or if they are from the same family or if they need each other (like Hannibal and Clarisse in *The Silence of the Lambs*) they will have to fight and the story will unfold.

Individualizing the characters by their opinion on the moral issue

You have now to individualize each character in your web. We'll do it through different steps, but not by taking each character individually. We will do that by comparison to the rest of the group. And one of the main comparisons is to think about the moral issue of the story. If the moral issue is not obvious for you, it's the moment to think about it. Re-read your moral issue and think about the moral questions set by your story. You'll need to find some moral issues if you want to touch your players with your larp.

There are several opinions and options around a moral issue. Find for all the characters a convincing opinion that is different from the other's - especially if we're talking about the hero and the opponent. Pay attention: different does not mean two extreme positions. Conflicts between good and evil are often used but aren't very efficient. For every moral dilemma you'll find a wide range of opinions. The more you understand the complexity of this range, the more your story will be rich.

Main characteristics of each character

It's time now to give precise characteristics to each character. Once again, this work is something that you have to do by comparing all of them.

Need / Desire

You're gonna provide a desire to all your characters. This desire must be chosen in comparison with the hero's desire to serve the story. This desire will be the driving force and the light the hero will follow.

If the character's desire disappears or seems unclear or impossible to get, think that the desire of the player will vanish too.

The character's need is different from her desire. The need is something deeper, maybe hidden under the surface, often not obvious. For example, the hero wants to win the tournament, it's her desire, but she does so because she wants to be more self confident.

"I gave 10 things to do to each player, why are they bored?"

A story follows a unique line of desire. This is the Hollywood dogma. But also the dogma of many traditional stories, of theatre and probably of the majority of the stories you know. The hero wants something and will try to reach it.

In a larp, if your character wants 3 different things for 3 different reasons, it's never because the author thinks that these 3 things will serve the moral issue and allow the character to change in a beautiful and consistent transformation. It's just because she wants to be sure that you'll find something to do during the all weekend. Here we will trust ourselves and bet on an unique desire and build our story around it.

Besides the fact that the desire should be unique, it's a good thing to have a precise desire that's easy to understand. It's also a good thing to be able to say when the character will reach it, to be able to say if she is far or close or if the object of desire is lost forever.

Once again, it's easy to make the difference between

the desire and the need because if I say that the desire of my hero is to become an adult, I will not be able to say if she is close or not. Am I an adult because I bought a house, I defeat my father, I found a good job?

Find a need and a desire for each character. Know you should be able to write a premise centered on each character like you did for the hero at the first step of this method.

Weakness

Each character has a weakness. It's the hero's main characteristic because this weakness will help the opponent to fight her. By struggling with this weakness, the hero has a chance to change. That's what we call the **Transformation**. (We will talk about it again later)

The weakness and the transformation are the foundations to have a character that seems human and has a deep personality. Do not give a weakness to the hero only. Build each character with her own weakness and think about how the opponents will be able to use it against them.

Power, status and abilities

A character is also designed by what she can do, by her means to interfere with the storyline. What can she do to reach her desire? For each character, write something about her powers and what she is able to do.

Transformation of the character

That's what we also call the "character arc". The transformation is an evolution of the character that matches the desire and the needs. It's a key point of the tools of Truby and McKee and everybody who wrote about storytelling through the ages. We could say that: if your character appears in the story with a few characteristics and if she will go to the end of the story without any evolution, or if the transformation sounds fake, then you can throw your story in the toilets. Exactly like for the weakness, do not think about a transformation for the hero only but for all the characters.

According to some script doctors and theorists, there is a limited number of transformations. Larpers! You shouldn't laugh when you're speaking about Hollywood; I think that I found less different transformations in the larps I played in my entire life.

Let's see a few of the main transformations (and let's compare with what you've already observed in larps):

Child to adult: Often used in a coming-of-age-novel, the hero who will change this way will question her moral values before she will do something important.

Adult to leader: A character looking for her way will discover that she must also help the other to find their path.

Cynic to participant: An egoistic character will discover that he can become a champion to help the others.

Leader to tyrant: Who said that a story has always a happy end? By exploring the famous weakness of the king/father archetype, the leader forces the others to follow her way.

Leader to visionary: By helping the others to find their own way, the character understands the true nature of the world and can perceive the future and the change that will come. The moral vision must be clear and precise and we will find this kind of transformation only if the author can have a precise idea of the future of her universe.

Do not feel limited by this list. Your characters probably have their own characteristics. To create a transformation that seems real, it's a good thing to think about the place where you want your hero to be at the end of the story and then to think about the beginning. The need and the desire will help you to create the potential transformations of your characters.

For a larp, temptation to speak about a transformation in the character's background is strong. Sometimes we choose to design the beginning of the story without any clue about where we want to go. We need a lawyer for a special moment in the story and we think that a lawyer could be a good character. Then we try to link this character to the others and we have this feeling that he could be helpful for many of them. But you should try to create characters with a deep need in their minds that will force them to change. Re-read your larpscript and ask yourself what are the needs and if a transformation is possible. You'll see how efficient it is and you're gonna use this tool again for your next larp.

Knowing where you want your character to go at the end of the story will help you not to lose your mind in complex and useless stories that will not help your characters to change.

To go further

A true revelation at the end of the story

Let's talk about this moment where the character changes. There is often a revelation at the same time in traditional stories. Think about detective novels.

You will have a striking revelation if:

- It creates emotions for the public;
- It's plausible, especially when you think about everything the hero learned before;
- It produces awareness for the hero;
- It brings new information to the hero;
- It makes the hero change and creates a transformation.

"Why do I feel strange during the debriefing at the end of a larp when I realise that I didn't catch anything about the story of the game?"

I know a lot of larp designers who are looking for a final revelation, as awesome as the one in "The sixth sense". That's a good thing to start writing an interesting story (We are actually working on a specific method about it). You should check if this revelation is plausible and if it will have an influence on the hero. There is nothing worst than a revelation like "It was just magic". Except of course in a universe where magic has rules and has been explained precisely.

Improve your characters with their archetype

Some people said that all the stories have been told. Today we are still telling the same stories over and over again. It's probably not true, but this feeling comes from the fact that most of the stories are close to a famous and almost universal myth. Matrix could be the story of Jesus Christ; Hulk is Mr Hyde. Dr House is Sherlock Holmes.

These myths are raw material to design a modern story. You can draw what you need in this universal language to tell a story that will be understood by the public. It's the same with the characters. Archetypes are fundamental psychological patterns within a person; they are roles a person may play in society, essential way of interacting with others. Because they are basis to all human beings, they cross cultural boundaries and have universal appeals.

Starting with the psychologist Carl Jung, many writers have spoken about what the different archetypes mean and how they connect. For fiction writers, probably the key concept of an archetype is the notion of a shadow. The shadow is the negative tendency of the archetype, a psychological trap that a person can fall into when living out that psychology.

We need to translate each major archetype and its shadow into practical techniques that you can use

in your larp:

King or father: Leads her family or her people with wisdom.

Shadow: Can force her people to act according to a strict and oppressive set of rules without any emotion.

Queen or mother: Provides the care and protective shell within which the child or the people can grow. Shadow: Can be protective or controlling to the point of tyranny, or can use guilt and shame to hold the child close and guarantee her own comfort.

Mentor: Passes on knowledge and wisdom so that people can live better lives and society can improve. Shadow: Can force students to think a certain way or speak about the glory of himself rather than the glory of his ideas.

Warrior: The practical enforcer of what is right. Shadow: Can live according to the harsh motto of "kill"

Magician/Trickster: Can make visible the deeper reality behind the senses and can balance and control the larger of hidden forces of the natural world.

Shadow: Can manipulate the deeper reality to enslave others and destroy the natural order.

Artist: Defines excellence for a people or, negatively, shows them what doesn't work; shows them the beauty and a vision of the future or what appears to

be beautiful but is in fact ugly or foolish.

Shadow: Can be the ultimate fascist insisting on perfection, may create a special world where all can be controlled, or simply tears everything down so that nothing has value.

Lover: Provides the care, understanding, and sensuality that can make someone a complete and happy person.

Shadow: Can lose himself in the other or force the other to stand in her shadow.

Rebel: Has the courage to stand out from the crowd and act against a system that is enslaving people.

Shadow: Often cannot or does not provide a better alternative, so ends up only destroying the system or the society.

Let's try to find which archetype is the closest from each character and write it. It will help you to see if you want to explore her shadow and to create stronger character.

Quality check

Is my character web strong enough?

Archetypes, values, moral opinion of my characters. Are they different from each other?

Does each character have a unique and strong desire at the beginning of my story?

Do I feel empathy for each of them?

Will the moral issue create conflicts?

Will the weakness of my characters hold them far from their desire?

To go further

Love stories and buddy stories

Love stories

"I choose two players who are in love to play the roles of two lovers and it didn't make a good love story. Why?"

What is a love story? It's a story designed to show the audience the value of a community between two equals. The central concept of love stories is quite profound. Love stories say that a person becomes a unique and authentic individual only by entering into a community (generally of two) It is through the love of the other that each person grows and becomes his or her deepest self.

If you give two different desires, it's gonna be hard to link these two lines of desire to go to a mutual transformation. There is often one character who is the main character and has the main desire. For Hollywood it's often the man in an hetero couple. But some exceptions exist and some of them are part of the most famous movies ever, probably because of this specificity, like "Gone with the wind"

That means that the main conflict is between the hero and the loved one. The love one isn't an ally, but the opponent.

Buddy stories

The buddy strategy allows you essentially to cut the hero into two parts, showing two different approaches to life and two sets of talents. These two characters are "married" into a team in such a way that the audience can see their differences but also see how these differences actually help them work well together, so that the whole becomes greater than the sum of the parts.

Sometimes the buddy is the opponent, the ally but he is not directly fighting the other one. Often associated with a travel story, the adventures of the buddies occupy most of their time, so they don't have much time to fight.

Example

The characters web of my LARP

Function: Hero

Moral opinion: Follow the rules of a knight's order like bravery and self-abnegation

Desire: Become a hero of the rebels against the empire

Need: To assert himself, to truly believe in his values

Weakness: young and inexperienced, he doubts of his own abilities

Power & abilities: he has an old and rare magic power that is a legacy from his father and he must learn how to use it

Expected transformation: Child to adult

Archetype: The warrior

Function: Opponent

Moral opinion: Old adept from the knights order, he thinks now that their values are inefficient and that a leader should force the people to follow him for his own good.

Desire: Maintain order and law by destroying the rebels

Need: The other should accept his values even if he has to force them

Weakness: He doesn't understand that he can't force everybody to believe and think like he does

Power & abilities: He has the same magic power than the hero but he is a master in this art

Expected transformation: Realise that he made mistakes or become a tyrant.

Archetype: The king/the father

Function: Ally

Moral opinion: Doesn't care about the rules of the knights. He works for himself before anything else, without taking in consideration any noble cause

Desire: Being paid for what he is doing for the hero

Need: To feel that the hero is grateful

Weakness: Because he wants to be free and neutral, he could lose the love of his fellows

Power & abilities: He is experienced when the hero is not

Expected transformation: Must forget his own interest to help his fellows and obtain their love

Archetype: The magician/The trickster



Germanies, by ORC - 2010

Step 6 - The game situations

A game situation is a scene that could happen during your LARP. You can imagine these scenes, but no obligation to write them in detail. Your players will be often free to create them as they want. Some game situations are necessary to the good progress

of your story. They are often the ones that match to **dramatic knots** of the story. The ones you have to look with an extreme attention. Others are optional or may largely change according to the choices of the players. In every case, we will write these game situations in the form of a short file.

What is a dramatic knot?

A dramatic knot in a story is simply a strong moment, which increases the dramatic tension. A dramatic knot may fill different functions. Here are some of these functions, suggested by Linda Seger in her book, *Making A Good Script Great*:

- **Make the action progress in a new direction:** Usual in a police series where an event leads to a new main suspect.
- **Ask again the main question of the story:** In a romantic comedy, each meeting between the two main characters ends happily or not. It asks again the question of knowing if they will succeed to form a couple.
- **Moment of decision or commitment of the protagonist:** Perfectly illustrated in the movie *Matrix* with the choice of Neo between blue and red pill.
- **Revive the stakes of the protagonist:** The murder of Sonny in *The Godfather*, changing the succession order of the Corleone's is an example of dramatic knot that changes the stakes of the protagonist.
- **Make the story progress to the next act:** The works which present separated "pictures" use this kind of dramatic knot. For example *Gone with the wind*, where each dramatic knot ends a period of the character's life and lays down the beginnings of the next age.
- **Lead to a new place where the action happens:** We may have doubts about the importance of this function in dramatic art, but we have to admit that movies use it widely for its strong symbolism. It tallies with the change of scene for a new act in theater.
- **Give a new focus to the action:** In *The Lord of the Rings*, the council in Rivendell reveals that the action will lead the characters further than they thought before, with new important characters with their own objectives, which have to be taken into account.

When you will try to find an interesting game situation in your story, think about these functions to choose which could make a good dramatic knot.

When you suggest a game situation to the other members of your team, you can describe it as if you were a director explaining a scene of your next movie. It's unnecessary at this moment to care about the way the players would react, or they way they will really play the scene. Do exactly as if you were telling a scene of a movie.

If this game situation seems attractive to you, you need to be sure it could happen during your game. Here is the way you can write a game situation.

Description of the game situation

Pitch of the game situation

Sum up in a few lines the scene such as you imagine it.

Point of view on the situation

Ask yourself which characters are concerned by the game situation. It is possible that the scene takes place somewhere with many people gathered. However it is aimed only at a few ones. Identify

who is the hero of this scene.

Potential conclusions

It is possible that you just have to think about the success or the failure of the hero in his/her undertaking. Either he/she succeeds to steal the diamond, or he/she gets caught. But sometimes you need to consider a range of wider options.

In a game where desires of your characters are

precise enough, it is unnecessary to consider the case in which your hero becomes suddenly a monk, although it remains a possibility. Keep in mind that many game situations can be spread over several hours and form several scenes before they find a conclusion. If I imagine a couple that tears apart, I will imagine the case in which they divorce and the other in which they forgive themselves. But the players will maybe spread this situation over many scenes.

Quality check

Is this game situation viable?

Does this situation stick to the theme?

Are the characters active? Is it fun?

Does the scene make the story progress? (Look at the different dramatic knots)

Are there conceivable consequences? Which ones? (You probably should find new game situations)

Necessary means

It's only now, once you are convinced that the game situation must happen (or at least must be possible) that the real work of the LARP designer begins. If you want this game situation to exist, the players need to have all the necessary information, but also all the resources to create it. The following method is maybe too mechanical to be systematically applied, but read it often and keep in mind the main part to remain organized in your creation.

Preliminary information

That's the most obvious case. A player must initiate the game situation. So you need to give to him/her the information that leads him/her to undertake the initial action. Write the information about the past story following the game situation.

You will now add this information in a new document with the name of the character. Congratulations, you just started to write the "skeleton" of his/her future **character sheet**. You will soon have just to write all these information in a more fictionalized way. You can transfer to this document the identification sheet of the character you wrote at the previous step, including his/her needs and weaknesses.

Example: If I want that the hero attacks the duke, he must know that the duke killed his parents.

It can be also information linked to the setting of the LARP. In that case, you need to add it to the setting you began to write in the fundamentals.

Is it information with direct or latent effect?

As easy as pie. Information given to a character has a **direct effect** if it can be immediately transcript in acts by the player. If he knows that the duke killed his parents, he can plan immediately to ask him for a duel when he will see him. He can anticipate the game situation from the moment he has the information.

Information has a **latent effect** if it doesn't allow a perfect anticipation. If the hero knows that the murderer of his parents was marked at the face by a sword, he can't anticipate that it is the duke. However, when he will meet the duke, the horrible scar on his face will revive the memory of the information and he will be able to transcribe it in action.

Secondary information

On the contrary to the preliminary information, these ones can be found during the game, for example at the end of a first game situation. For example, the duke may reveal to the hero that he committed the murder on order of someone else. There is an infinity of means to give information to the characters during the game. The ideal in demand is often that each game situation leads to other ones. Let your players access to information they need in a clear way. The major drawback of authors is to complicate everything in a useless way to add some difficulties. That's how a game becomes less fluid and doesn't work anymore at the end.

You will have to note down the secondary

information in the appropriate character sheets or in the **sheets of NPCs** who will be in charge of revealing these information. These documents have the same structure as a character sheet.

The required rules

Your game situation needs maybe **simulation rules**. Lock picking, theft, fight, magic, questioning, *etc.* It is at this moment, after you decided that the game situation might happen in your LARP, that you will think about simulation. Don't write tons of rules apart from your story. Write just what you need, when you need it, keeping in mind the precise situation in which the rule will be used.

You just began to create the **rules document** of your LARP. You will complete it as you go along. Just note down in it the name of the rule, the game situation it applies to and a summary of what it has to permit. We will think later about the best way to create simulation.

I make the most of the opportunity to speak about **interpretation rules**. When you described the game situation, you probably thought about the characters behaving in a certain way. The hero was talking to the duke slowly and with panache. The other players didn't interrupt him. Maybe you need some interpretation rules to have such a scene. For example, when a player starts a long speech, it is forbidden to interrupt him, unless he is talking

to them. According to me, these interpretation rules deserve a document apart and must be communicated quickly to the players, so that they clearly understand your vision of the game.

Dedicated space

This aspect is regularly neglected. Remember of the best scenes you played. They often took place in a dedicated space, where external people to the scene did not disturb the participants. It is a great sign of success to have a dedicated space for a game situation. When it's possible, don't hesitate to think about compartmentalized spaces you can set up. The duke may ask to meet the hero in his office at the beginning of the LARP. This office will be the ideal space for a beautiful fight without perturbation.

You can now open the document with the **ideal map** of your game area. In concrete terms, this document is a list of places you need to lay out. Some of them are necessary for the game; others are optional.

Dedicated time

You need to answer a question: Who is the initiator of the game situation? It may be a player or an NPC. In both cases you can try to control the moment the situation will happen. The hero may want to kill the murderer of his parents at midnight, the day of their death anniversary.



La complainte de Berthold Brumer, by Monolithe - 2010



Dr House, by eXperience - 2010



If you book a schedule for your game situation, it's an additional success element (if the reason is not too artificial). If you have a precise idea of the moment the scene will happen, you can open a new document: your **orga/NPC schedule**.

This document contains every game situation with the hour of start (when it's possible to know it). You will add later all the elements which concern the establishment of the game and its de-installation. A colour code and the inscription of the responsible of each task will be beautiful.

When you think about the duration of a game situation, you can estimate in an easier way the time a player will need to go completely through his/her story.

Staging

A beautiful game situation needs sometimes to set up special effects, or that an NPC learns a text, or simply that light is turned off. It won't set up itself. You can complete your orga/NPC schedule with each task that has to be done. The sheets of NPCs will contain the information to know about staging.

Don't forget to work on this aspect from now. This method gives many reflection elements on the writing of a story, but the work of the scriptwriter mixes with the work of the stage director for the one who wants to design a LARP.

Equipment

If the game situation needs a specific décor, an accessory or a costume, you need to write it now. You can open a new document: the **needs for equipment**. Note down everything you need and the game situation. You will come back later on this document to think about the budget and feasibility. It's not really our subject here. However you can imagine you need to keep in mind all the time the feasibility of the project.

Special player

It is possible you need a special player to play this character. The player needs to play the trumpet or must not be afraid of the dark. He/she must be comfortable with his/her body. The reasons may be various. That's when you imagine concrete situations of your LARP that you need to think about the casting.

You can now open a document called **casting questionnaire**. It's in this document that you will ask to your players all the information you really need for your LARP. You can ask them what they wish to play of course. But you can also ask them if they were ok to see their costume marked with blood, if they feel able to learn a text by heart, *etc.*

If you fill it as you go along, you don't risk forgetting an important detail.

Example

The game situations of my LARP

Pitch of the situation: The hero will fight against his opponent although he doesn't master his power yet, and will lose because of his lack of experience. The opponent will take advantage of it, trying to win him over to his cause.

Point of view on the situation: The hero and the opponent are present. This scene is dedicated to the hero for the first part, then to the opponent for the second part.

Potential conclusions: The hero becomes a prisoner. He will have later to run away and find a master who will teach to him to use his power before he tries again to fight against his opponent. Other potential conclusion, even if it is unlikely: The hero rallies to the opponent.

Preliminary information: The hero and the opponent must be at the same place, at the same time. They need a reason to fight. The opponent needs to take the hero alive to try to win him over to his cause.

Information with direct effect: The hero knows where the empire tyrant is. He prepares to fight against him.

Information with latent effect: The opponent learned that the hero joined the rebellion. He hopes making him a prisoner to win him over to his cause and destroy the rebellion thanks to his help. He takes advantage of the attack of the hero to carry out his plan.

Secondary information: None.

Required rules: Fight rules including the powers of the hero and the opponent. The opponent has to come out clearly on top against the hero and find a way to render him harmless, without killing him.

Dedicated space: Other characters must not disturb the fight. The opponent will be in his own apartments in which the hero succeeded to enter. You need also a cell in which the hero will be seated after his arrest.

Dedicated time: The hero planned his attack at a precise moment. The opponent is reading documents in his apartments at this time.

Staging: The opponent has underling NPCs who need to be ready to come and put the hero in a cell once they are called.

Equipment: Nothing special.

Special player: No special need.

Pitch of the situation: The ally will learn that the hero is in a cell and come to save him from this tricky situation.

Point of view on the situation: The ally

Potential conclusions: The ally saves the hero or fails. Check if a failure must be possible.

Preliminary information: The ally has to learn that the hero is in a cell. He has to overcome his weakness to save him in a disinterested way.

Information with direct effect: The ally has a meeting with the hero to be paid for the favors he did to him. At the meeting, another character comes. It's a member of the rebellion who comes with the money and says to the ally that hero was arrested by the empire.

Informations with latent effect:

- The hero and the ally parted angry. The ally has remorse and would like to show to the hero that he appreciates him, but he doesn't know how to do it.

- The ally goes places for a long time and has already been dealing with the empire. He has been even arrested once, but he knows every security code and ventilation shaft in the empire's prisons and ran away.

Secondary information: The previous game situation must happen and the hero must be in a cell.

Required rules: Rules that permit to deal with action and infiltration scenes.

Dedicated space: A place of meeting for the ally and the member of the rebellion. The cell in which the hero is locked up, and a complex around the ally can infiltrate.

Dedicated time: The hero and the ally have a meeting at a precise moment, at least two hours after the previous game situation.

Staging: An NPC member of the rebellion who comes to give information to the ally. A prison complex that can be infiltrated.

Equipment: A suitcase with money.

Special player: No special need.

Other elements

Step 7 - Rules

During the step 6, you noted many rules you need for your LARP. This is not a method about game simulation and we'll not try to see what is the better way to simulate a fight or sex. Sometimes, a complex system will be fun, but, because we are now talking about storytelling with a LARP, we'll often try to find rules which are easy to learn and easy to play.

For each rule you wrote, you also wrote a word about the game situation that could need it. So you'll be able to imagine your players in a realistic situation. That's a good thing.

What do you want to simulate?

This is an essential question. Of course, you know that you need a rule for lock picking, but... What is the player supposed to feel when a player uses the rule? You can insist on the fear to be caught during the action, on the ability she needs, on the reflection... It will be totally different if you choose a system that forces the player to stand near the door during a minute or if you give her some tools to open the door.

Is it possible to fail?

Don't assume that fail is possible if you're gonna regret it. I saw too many game masters in a tabletop rpg asking to roll dices to a player and thinking after a critical fail that the character HAS to success for the story. Think about the consequences of a fail. Will they need to try again later? Will the character die? Will she be stucked?

How do you give the rule to the players?

The simulation rule is ready. Now you need to teach that rule to the players who will need it. You can choose to give all the rules to all the players but that's not necessarily the best choice.

In fact, in many cases, the player doesn't need to know all the rules. For example, you can choose to teach the medicine rules only to the doctors. The player who plays the patient doesn't need to know how she has been cured.

It's also possible to put the rules somewhere in the play area. Let's imagine a bar in which players can choose to fight without any consequence on the health of their characters. You can put the rules at the entrance of the bar on the wooden panel "Fight prohibited".

Is my rule system fun and playful?

It's not fun to stay 30 minutes out of the game. You need suspense, doubt and challenge. That doesn't mean only fail or success. You can also think about the time that takes this kind of action.

Does my system fit with the context?

In a LARP base on Conan, the barbarian, you should avoid use roshambo to simulate a fight. In a swashbuckler game, you should try to create long fight with a lot of panache. Keep the ambiance of your game situations.

Is my rule system easy to play? (In-game, off-game, need for an organizer, etc.)

Test your own rules. Fake many situations as if you were a player. Does the rule force you to use off-game elements? Is that necessary? Can you hide these elements in the game with elegance? Does an organizer need to be there? Test your rule many times and do not think that one test is enough. Nothing is worst than a rule that is useless.

Are the explanations easy to understand?

If your rule is perfectly intuitive, that's easy. On the other way, you'll need short and clear explanations that all the players will be able to learn. If you think that they are complex but efficient, use some time before the game to test it with the players during a workshop.

One word about interpretation rules?

Some rules are not simulation rules. These are rules you'll give to the players to change their behaviour and induce a specific roleplay. You could ask them to speak with an accent for example, or to never interrupt other players when they are speaking. These rules are hard to explain in a text. A briefing or a workshop will often be the best way to remind them how you want them to act in their characters.

Quality check

Is that the right rule for my game?

- Is the rule fun to play?
- Does it fits with the context?
- Is the rule fluid?
- Is the rule intuitive or well explained?

Step 8 - Logistics

Take back your Orga/NPC schedule. It contains a lot of things. You find in it instructions about setting up the equipment, instructions for your NPCs who have to initiate game situations, a planned time for the pre-larp workshops, the briefing, but also meals and deinstallation of the game area.

Workshops

You can book time for pre-larp workshops. During a workshop, you can ask to a group of players to get ready for the game to come. They can test a rule or train to play their characters. They can also play scenes of their past or talk together about what they want to play during the game. They need space and time to have this talk.

Briefings

Whether it is a main or personal briefing, prepare it before! Write in a new document called **Briefings** what you have to tell to the players or to give to them. You have to allow enough organizers so that everything remains fluid and tidy.

This document may also be filled when you read over the game situations and rules. You will probably need to add elements about security linked to your game area or your players.

Set up the equipment

You will have to set up equipment before the game and sometimes during it. In any case, don't use only your schedule for the elements happening during the game. For each element to set up, write the hour it needs to be set up and the place. Note also the organizer who has to do it (with a number if you don't know yet who will be in charge). Ideally, the main organizer will have just to deal with the unexpected stuff the day of the game. Don't worry; there will be several.

The events

Sometimes a game situation has to be initiated by an NPC or an organizer. So you need him/her to be ready at the right moment (and sometimes it means with costume and make up). If it is detailed enough

in your schedule, you can give to everyone details of what he/she has to do. You will avoid thus to recruit too many or too less NPCs. You can estimate how many people you need. It's a significant saving of time and comfort.

Meals

Good meals are important. A competent volunteer will probably manage them. Don't wear out his/her patience. Treat him/her considerately. You probably would be lost without him/her. Find a place for the kitchen. Plan the scene of the meal like one of your most important game situations. Don't push it into the background. Whether your meal is in or out of game, make an effort so that it is treated with first-class attention.

Tidying up

On your schedule, you planned the end of the game at a precise moment. But you know that work doesn't stop at this time. You need maybe to gather the players somewhere and tell them a word. Write in the **Briefings** document what you want to tell.

Give a sense of responsibility to your players. Tidying up a game area is more work for ten people than 120. If you organize your players in different teams under the responsibility of an organizer, you can do miracles in a short time without expending too much energy. Your motivation might diminish in time. You need to preserve it.

So you probably understood that we encourage you to plan everything with as much attention as the writing of the characters or the setting. Write with extreme details the list of everything the organizers and NPCs will have to do before, during and after the game.

The dismantling of the coffee maker of the room 6 at 23h40 must be scheduled and written in the same way as the sending of special rules for the players who play the cops.

Step 9 - Communication

At the beginning of a project, there is often the envy of an organizer. She is the first who believe in the project. She'll need to give this envy to the players. Then, she'll need to keep them motivate in order to push them to give the best during the game. The only problem is that they will not have the patience to read a text like this one. The good point is that they don't have to know as many things as her.

Final redaction of the context

Your context exists for now in your Fundamentals. But you wrote it for you. You'll now need to explain it to the players. There are many ways to do that, but the easy way is to write a text. This text is sometime the first contact the players will have with the game. If you're not a very very good writer, make it short! If you want to take some time to write something beautiful, you can do it. It's you game, and you vision. You have to tell the players why it's important to you.

The designer's vision

You could also talk to the players about why you designed that particular game, and how you designed it. Tell them what they will find in this game and what they will not. I'm sure you have a lot of awesome talks with the other organizers about the movies and the books you used. Why not talk about it to the players? You will help them to truly understand your LARP.

Briefing and workshops

When your players will be there in front of you,

you'll have another occasion to talk to them. Keep in mind that they maybe read quickly everything you sent before, or forget it. You could use some workshops to prepare them for the game.

One of your characters does many nightmares. Why not put her in a chair in front of a TV with images of these nightmares.

A player will be in charge of a mercenary group. Ask to the players to play a scene where they are talking about the captain. The player who will play the captain will stand in a corner and watch. A good way to prepare for the LARP for them. A good way for the captain to understand what the others are expecting.

You can also ask to the players to sit and relax silently before the game. Everything is good to be in a good mood to play.

Casting questions

When they'll subscribe, your players may have answer a lot of questions. Take them in consideration! Read each answer carefully. Some of the questions should eliminate some characters. That's why you asked it, right? But, maybe your players add some notes. Do not forget to read it! If you worked well, the player understood what is the LARP about and she has now a clear vision of what it will be. In this context of your LARP, she is maybe attracted by something in particular and not by something else. Don't give to a player a role she doesn't want without a good reason. Don't think you know her better than she did or you'll make a huge mistake!



SHOW 7, by Don Quichotte - 2012

Follow-up and organization

Step 10 - Sharing the tasks out and writing

You have now a schedule for organizers, an ideal map of the game area, an idea of what the game offers, rules, *etc.* You estimated your needs in NPCs. You have to share the work out.

Write each remaining task in the **to do list**. Name a person in charge for each task. You need to recruit NPCs and prepare the accessories and the decors. You may create a website to manage the sign-ups.

But above all, you need to transform the skeletons of the character sheets into real ones. We advise you to use an online working tool. Some of them are even dedicated to LARP writing.

Set the style

How will you write theses sheets? In the form of a newspaper? Which time will you use? Is the narrator

the character itself or an omniscient narrator? Be coherent within the same sheet.

Avoid the bugs

When you write the character sheets, you need to be really careful. Refer to the setting and to the game situations to avoid mistakes from a sheet to another. But if you worked correctly the skeleton of the sheet contains already all the required information.

Read over

It would be really sad to have accomplished all this work and to give the players a sheet plenty of mistakes. Set up a system of commentaries and read over the sheets. Look for bugs but also syntax or grammar mistakes.

Specificities

When you will design your LARP you will probably develop some specific problems. You will free from the method and create documents to manage an aspect we didn't speak about here. Think about managing them with as much care as the rest.



Spirits of Hannington wick, by Les amis de Miss Rachel, 2011

eXperience method – FAQ

A unique desire, does it mean a unique objective?

To give a unique desire to a character gets back to give him/her a unique final objective. Designing a game with the eXperience method means that you try to avoid players who scatter in secondary plots without connection to their own stories. However, a character can perfectly go through intermediate steps to reach his/her final objective. These steps will constitute a series of objectives serving the same goal.

But if something doesn't work in the story of a character, he/she won't have anything to do! Isn't it too risky?

Trust yourself! We think that organizers should more often trust their ideas and the stories they set up, rather than trying to fill the potential failings with multiple secondary plots. That is what we try to do with this method and we think that it works. If you did what was necessary for a story to work, trust your players to set it up. They will thus keep better memories of the game.

This method seems to work for a small group of characters, but it doesn't seem very appropriate for a big game.

Your game deals with several groups? Think to use this method directly for groups rather than characters. You will thus build a macro-story which will concern the different groups, and you can then create one or several micro-stories within each group.

How to write several stories in parallel within the same game?

The elements of setting will give you the different characters and what gather them together, even if they are within different stories. The ideal is that the moral issue in the center of each story is the same, to give a common theme. Don't try to cross the different stories between them! You would complicate your work for a doubtful gain. Prefer to write them in parallel without any link; the characters will meet them anyway because they share a similar setting.

More ?

www.electro-larp.com



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