

Transmigration of Souls

Non-verbal sensory larp using movement meditation, dance and touch to explore the interconnectivity of ecosystems

8-20+ players

3.5 - 4 hours



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PRE-GAME

What you need: a large playing space big enough for players to move around and dance, 20 Soul Character Prompts, 30 Animal Character Cards, selection of fruits and herbs, sound system and device to play from, 5 large objects/furniture items as props, 1 empty and 1 full glass of water, matches

Characters

You should aim for around 20 Soul Character Prompts, or at least a few more than players. There are some suggestions on page 12 which can be cut up and used for play, players always have the option to write their own. The Soul Character Prompts are spread out lying face up at the side of the playing space (on a chair or small table would be ideal) so players can choose. There should be around 30 Animal Character Cards, printed pictures of non-human animals and plants that are native to your location. This can be a mix of mammals, birds, insects, invertebrates, plants. Some European animal pictures are printed on pages 13-19 which can be cut up and used for play. The animal characters are stacked in a pile face down next to the Soul Character Prompts.

Food

This will be used for smelling during the larp. You should aim for a range of fragrant smells, such as citrus fruit, thyme, rosemary, mint, chocolate. It should be able to be cut up and held over players' noses without dripping or making too much mess. The food should be prepared on a plate at the side of the playing space next to the Character cards.

Sound

Sound is integral to the experience and it's strongly suggested to use this Spotify playlist.

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/00SVjk3G8t5ZBnvkBo10da?si=1899be3328fc442a>

You could make your own if you wish, although tracks should be mostly without lyrics, rhythmic and danceable (except Winter tracks which should be much slower). The first 6 tracks of the playlist are for the workshop. You should play a slow meditative ambient track on repeat before players arrive, 1/1 Singing Bowl - Jon Hopkins is suggested, the first track of the Spotify playlist.

If you do wish to create your own, you should follow the moods of each season accordingly as outlined in the workshop. The second 'year' is shorter, and Winter and Autumn are just one track. This is to allow players sufficient time to rest but to keep the tempo up in the final part of the larp.

Lighting

Low lighting. If a lighting set up is available, it is suggested to use green for the workshop, white/blue for Winter, yellow for Spring, red for summer, and purple for Autumn. You will need to be able to switch between the colours during play. If there is an option to only use one colour, green. If there is no option for coloured lighting, this is ok.

All text in the workshop is to be read aloud. Anything written in brackets is an instruction to the GM.

WORKSHOP

(Ambient relaxing music should be played in background from before people arrive, Singing Bowl track from Spotify playlist recommended)

Intro

This is an abstract non-verbal larp that uses the theme of reincarnation as a way of connecting living entities to each other, through the continuation of souls through multiple animal bodies. Some might experience connections to their former animal selves through memory and trauma, or simply the way in which the soul continues to guide the body through different living organisms.

We will experience life, death, and rebirth, and through our sense of connection and materiality, we encounter the immateriality of the Transmigration of Souls.

There will be a pre-larp workshop lasting with some warm up activities and to understand the structure of the play, there will be a short break, the larp will be around 1 hour 30 minutes and with a short debrief to finish.

Body Scan

We are going to start the workshop with a relaxation. Find a comfortable place on the floor lying down on your back. Once everyone is comfortable we will begin with a few breaths. In, out, deep in, out through the mouth, deep breath in. Belly breaths.

(for this section you should aim for 2-3 breaths in each body part)

With the next breath, the focus should be on your feet, try and imagine breathing through them, right through your body up to your belly, your chest, then release any tension in your feet. Let go of them! Legs, pelvis and hips, lower belly, chest, shoulders, arms and hands, neck, face, forehead. (allow up to 30 seconds at the end of this for players to be in relaxed meditative state)

(Coming out of body scan)

Reach the arms up and overhead with a big stretch

Rotation of the ankles, one way and then the other

With your arms by your sides, you can gently move your hips from side to side

Slowly move to a seated position

Gently flicker the eyes open if they are not already open

Find a partner (if odd number then make a 3) Here we will help each other to warm up the body and the muscles. If there are any places on your body that you don't wish to be touched, please state this to your partner. One person starts gently tapping the other person on the arms.... legs.... Back and shoulders, move to gentle squeezing. Now swap over.

Face each other about 1m apart, close eyes if you feel ok doing so. Take a deep breath in.... And out. Take a deep breath in, filling up the lungs, and let everything out through the mouth. And one more big breath, in through the nose, and out through the mouth. Now keep focus on the breath, I will add some music and just follow my instructions.

(play track, suggestion Repeating Night - The Mauskovic Dance Band)

Keep your feet planted with a soft bend in the knees, you can start a gentle sway if it feels good. Start to wiggle your fingers slowly, and then this movement can come up to the wrist, a gentle rotation. Just like in the body scan, focus on the breath and how it relates to the body part you are moving, where your attention is. The wrist movements can extend to your arms and shoulders, keep breathing and keep noticing. You might just still be swaying, you might be at a full on dance, either is fine. I will now ask you to feel an invisible string between you and your partner. You can hold this string in your hand or it can be tied to your arm or waist, whatever feels good for you. I would now like you to gently open the eyes to see your partner moving. I will stop the music, at this point you will stand still and the invisible string will be pulled tight between you so you can feel its tension. Keep focus on the breath throughout in relation to your body and your movement, even when you are stopped. (Stop music) (Continue/Stop x 3)

Animal Movement

Please think of a non-human animal you like, or have an affiliation with, this should be one you feel comfortable moving around as. We will move around the space as this animal in different moods and tempos. This will help you understand the structure of the larp and how you move.

Please be aware that throughout the whole play, we are moving as an animal but still conscious of our own human body. This might mean you adopt some characteristics of this animal but it doesn't dominate your movement or dance. Think of your animal and how you can represent it in your player body and we will quickly move through 4 seasons together in movement.

Any types of movement are acceptable in the play from walking, running, sitting, dancing. I invite you to keep your movements conscious, maintaining a focus on the breath and how you maintain awareness in different parts of your body as you move them, similar to the body scan. **I would like you to move as close to dancing as you feel comfortable with.**

Let's practice each season once, guided by my instruction. When I play the music we will move as your chosen animal.

Winter is slow, strong, grounding movements, represented by white light. (Start music)

Spring is playful, light, curious, expansive movements. Spring will be yellow. (Change track)

Summer is chaotic, intense, energetic movements. Summer is red. (Change track)

Autumn is dark, releasing and decaying movements. Autumn is purple. (Change track)

(Read only if lights are changing colours) The lights will change to colours corresponding with seasons.

Structure

We will follow the cycle of the seasons beginning with Winter and finishing with Autumn, in the larp we will go through 2 full cycles.

Although you will be guided by the mood and tempo of the music soundtrack in how you move, there is a general arc that I invite the group to follow for both intensity and interaction with others. Winter is an invitation to be grounded, to breathe, and to gently move from the ground up. Spring is more playful and interactive with others, but still light in movement. Summer is the high point of movement and energy, and autumn is still retaining this intensity but slower.

On average there are approximately 2 songs per season, although some are shorter and longer.

At the change of each season, I will call out the new season, as I did in the practice.

Characters

I will now give a brief introduction to the characters you will be playing.

Each player plays 2 types of character at the same time. The first is the 'Soul Character' which will be the same character throughout the entire play. The soul might change over time but it remains to be the same character.

The second character is the 'Animal Character'. The Animal Character bodies will die during the play, at this point players will be reincarnated, and continue as another Animal Character, always remaining as the same Soul Character. The Animal Character is movement driven. Right before the beginning of the larp you will choose your first Animal Character from the pictures provided.

Reincarnation Bath

(It is advised this is read and understood so you can demonstrate in advance)

This brings us on to the reincarnation.

This larp is not designed with a specific religious or belief system relating to reincarnation, each of you can hold your own views. The way in which it will be experienced during the larp is through what I am calling a 'sensory bath' based on touch, sound and smell. The techniques will be demonstrated and after this I will move on to character selection and what the sensory bath represents in the play. For now, you should know that you play animal characters, and this represents the limbo period of this animal dying and being reborn. We will practice this in groups of 3. (Get players into 3s, put yourself in one group if needed)

During the play, the player whose animal character dies lies down and closes eyes. They wait. 2 players see an animal character has died because the character is lying down motionless with their eyes closed. 1 player positions themselves either side of the body and we start with one 5 second gentle squeeze of the each hand by each player. In this moment, the player who is being reincarnated has an option to calibrate what they feel comfortable with in touch. In this moment the player can say for example, 'don't touch my right knee' or 'please only touch my

arms' whatever feels comfortable. As a rule, the off-limits areas for touch are chests/breasts and genital areas. If there is no response then we proceed as will be demonstrated. Please respect other people's bodies and wishes. If the player lying down at any point wants to stop then they just raise their hand.

We squeeze each hand to start, wait for a response, otherwise we continue. There are 3 elements to play with for the reincarnation. Touch, sound and smell.

Touch can be tapping, squeezing, stroking, gentle shaking. don't be too rough with each other, and don't use force.

Sound can be any non-verbal sound, clicks, sung notes, blowing, whistling, tapping on the ground. You can also use singular or combinations of words or fragments of sentences in any language.

Smells can be added, selected from this area as you wish.

You can try to coordinate with your partner by listening and watching them but it's not essential to the experience.

At points throughout the rehearsal, I will give instructions of how to touch and use sound, these instructions won't be part of the play but will help to indicate a range of textures you can use.

If the player who is being reincarnated wishes, they can visualise what happens to the animal body and soul character, in relation to the surrounding forest.

The reincarnation bath should last no longer than 5 minutes, but can be shorter. If you have been doing this longer than 1 full song, it is probably time to finish. The end of the reincarnation is shown the same way we started with the squeezing of the hand by each player. Their new animal character is placed into their hand and should be the first thing they look at when they open their eyes. The player lying down then very gently opens their eyes, in their own time will think about how to slowly get up and move as the new character.

In the case of a player raising their hand in the reincarnation to stop it then end the reincarnation with the hand squeeze and the player lying down are given their new character..

We are going to try this as a group, putting together sound and touch, we can later add smell during the larp. In your group of 3 and choose one player to lie down with their eyes closed. The other 2 players approach the lying down player, and begin with a synchronised squeeze of the hand to check in with them. Wait 5 seconds for a response, otherwise proceed with the reincarnation bath we've just learned.

If they wish, the player lying down visualises their animal character in their head, lying there in the forest. What happens to the body after it dies? How does the forest embrace the dead? You can now start.

(5 mins)

(Suggest to players whilst performing sensory baths): start with something slow and gentle, minimalistic.... building up the noise and the touch.... and diminuendo, getting softer and gentler again. Try something staccato short taps matched with sound.... and legato long sounds.

There isn't a limit to how many times you are reincarnated. Each animal being reincarnated needs 2 animals to reincarnate them. If there are too many players lying down at once then the GM will squeeze their hands with rapid movements to suggest it is not their time to die yet and they continue with this animal character for a while more.

(You should always try to have more than 1 person moving in the space. In the play, pay attention to who is being reincarnated and who, so you can avoid 'resurrecting' those players who have not yet had a turn being reincarnated.)

The sensory bath always happens with 3 players.

Events

At some points during the play there will be flood and fire in the forest, represented by water and flame. This is a flood (pour water from one glass to another). This is a forest fire (light a match). You can use this in the inner journey of your Soul Character if you wish, or you can die by other means.

During play, these events will be represented by the GM walking around the space and pouring water or lighting matches.

Character Selection

Now we will do a little recap of the characters and choose our Soul Characters.

Each player plays 2 types of character at the same time, the 'Soul Character' which will be the same character throughout the entire play and the 'Animal Character' which will die and be reborn. The soul might change over time but it remains to be the same character.

The Soul Character is goal-oriented or mood driven, I have made some prompts for the soul character, you are welcome to adapt them or make your own. If you are new to larp then I would recommend to choose goal-oriented (if printed in colour these are pink) as there is a little more instruction but it is entirely your choice. Please select your Soul Character now, take the card with you. (Players select Soul Character)

This instruction is the essence of your soul for the duration of the larp. There might be contradictions between the Soul Character and seasonal moods but this is totally fine, you can lean into this.

Setting and Playing Space

The larp takes place in a forest. We will use these 5 objects to represent 5 areas of the forest.

One player is invited to select an object, place it in the space and suggest what it represents, for example; 'a rainy valley'. A second player is invited to add a detail to this, for example; 'the valley contains a network of dark underground caves'. One by one let's place all 5 in the playing space, anyone can start.

(As they fetch the large objects you should ask something like 'can you tell us what this is?' and then 'who knows something about the swamp?' You might get more than one detail in response, go with it. At the end you should recap the 5 areas of the forest with the players so they remember)

Interaction and Safety

This is the last section of the workshop, after this we take a short break. You will receive your animal characters just before the start of the play.

Interaction with other characters is permitted and encouraged. This is a non-verbal larp, unless you are making a reincarnation happen or calibrating with the player lying down on what feels ok for them then it should be silent without talking. You can communicate with others in 2 ways, either by responding to other character movement including touch, or communicating through breathing. For example; this can be slow long breaths for empathy, or short sharp breaths for anger or anything in between. We will now try these 2 breaths on our own, anger and empathy.

Anger is short sharp breaths (demonstrate to group), now you try...

Empathy is long full breaths (demonstrate to group), now you try...

At any point, people can sit out or leave if they want to, if it's not feeling good, or for any reason. If something is wrong then please raise your hand with a palm, either a firm stop sign to stop whatever is happening at that moment, or pushing movements for it to slow down (demonstrate movements). If there is a serious problem, for example if someone is injured, please shout CUT and we will stop everything.

We have almost finished the workshop now, we will take a short break after which we will introduce the animal characters and begin the play. There is an opportunity to ask any questions now for anything that is unclear about the larp.

BREAK 10 MINS

There is a song which will begin and end the larp. It will be played right after you choose your starting animal characters. Upon hearing it at the end of the larp, all players should lie down on the ground to finish.

Animal Characters

Your animal character might define the area of the playing space you move within, it can define your movement. You're invited to use this to inspire your movement but you are still

encouraged to dance and move in a way that is expressive to you as a player, don't feel restricted to walk and move exactly like your animal. As a reminder, you will remain the same Soul Character throughout, and this Animal Character will change when you die and then are reincarnated. You will receive a new animal character during the reincarnation.

This is the final time to ask any questions.

You will now select an animal character from the face down pile. If you really don't like it, you can take the next one, but this won't be your character for the duration of play. Once you have selected, move to a place in the forest to begin the larp lying down on your backs, or sitting if it is more comfortable.

The rest of the play will be in silence. I hope you have an enjoyable and meaningful experience. (The following section segues into the larp so should be treated by the GM and players as such)

Body Scan

We will now prepare the body for the larp with the body scan that we started with. Players should make themselves comfortable on the floor.

Breathe in.... And breathe out.... deep breath in.... And out through the mouth.

With the next breath, breathe in all the way to your feet, focus your attention there and let go of any tension you feel. Legs, pelvis and hips, lower belly, chest, shoulders, arms and hands, neck, face, forehead. (Repeat same as before, 2-3 breaths on each body part)

VISUALISATION

Now picture your Animal Character in your mind. Your animal is asleep. You can see its entire body, its chest rising and falling with breath. With your eyes remaining closed, the animal in your mind wakes up in a part of the forest. It starts to take a slow walk around the forest, exploring. What does your animal see? What is it curious about? You see it walking around, how its body moves, how its legs or wings move. What is the journey that your animal is on? What is its fate? How does your animal express its soul?

PRE-LARP INTRO

(Play beginning song, 'Oh, Lovely Appearance of Death' - efdemin (Read the text below with dramatic projection so players can hear, it has to finish before the vocals come in 0.55' at a tempo without rushing)

Everything is born and dies, with something in between. This process doesn't happen in isolation to the rest of the universe, and for those that choose to believe, the soul returns to inhabit a different body. As it moves through temporary vessels, aspects of the soul fade away and aspects of the soul remain. Perhaps we leave traces behind through the cycles of death, rebirth, growth and decay. Perhaps there are phases in-between these stages of a life-cycle, messy and intersecting, overlapping the dark and the light. This is Transmigration of Souls.

LARP BEGINS

Play music, playlist for 1 hour 30 minutes.

Announce seasons as they arrive, but only at the beginning of the first track of that season. The tracklisting for the suggested Spotify playlist, with the corresponding season announcements, is below:

Oh, Lovely Appearance of Death - efdemin (No season)
 Ivy and Neet - This Mortal Coil - **Winter**
 So Long, Lonesome - Explosions In The Sky
 Birdwatching at Inner Forest (Penguin Café Mix) - Cornelius, Penguin Café - **Spring**
 Filaou Bessame - Amadou & Mariam
 Mogo koroba ko - Soungalo Coulibaly
 Junun - Shye Ben Tzur, Jonny Greenwood, The Rajasthan Express - **Summer**
 Toxygene (7" Edit) - The Orb
 Selva Cósmica - Bruxas - **Autumn**
 Way of the Ancestors (Original Mix) - Sahalé
 The Paleontologist - Konx-Om-Pax - **Winter**
 Stoney Street - Amon Tobin - **Spring**
 Bird - Kelly Lee Owens
 Papua New Guinea (7" Original) - The Future Sound of London - **Summer**
 Final Eclipse (Full Version) - The Comet is Coming
 Who I Am & Where I Am & Why I Am - Kaitlyn Aurelia Smith - **Autumn**
 Oh, Lovely Appearance of Death - efdemin (No season)

Players should recognise that it's the final track and gradually lie down. I would suggest dimming the lights a little more as a prompt, you could move them to lying down by taking their hand and showing them the ground if they are not there by the time the vocals begin.

There are some points in Winter and Autumn where it might seem slow and you want to push the tempo on or skip a track. I would advise against doing this, and let it play out for the players to have time in the slower seasons.

Fire and flood

You will walk around the space, moving the water from one glass to the other to represent flood and lighting the matches to represent fire. Don't chase players when doing this, just calmly walk through the space and do it near them. It is best just to focus on a small area of the space, perhaps 3-4 players each time. **Do each action once**, one fire and one flood over the course of the play, unless you feel that no-one saw or responded, in which case you can choose one to do again.

(Fade music and lighting to finish with a pause of a few seconds of silence at the end.)

To be spoken out loud: That is the end of the larp, please take your time in getting up and we will gather together in a circle in the middle of the room.

Debrief

Take a round to see how players are feeling to check everyone is ok.

After all players have spoken once, they can add additional comments about the experience if they wish, in any order.

SOUL CHARACTER PROMPTS

This page can be cut up to be used in the workshop, there is an option for players to create their own too.

Your curiosity can lead you to danger

You are accepting of forest diversity

You build brilliant homes that bring a feeling of safety

You find it easy to see the perspectives of others

You have an intuitive connection with other lifeforms

Your long memory helps forest survival but can also be painful

You feel satisfaction through other animals connection

Your patience allows you to be at peace and feel present

Your wisdom is good for the health of the ecosystem

Caring, protection

Social, expressive

Wild, scavenger

Anticipating, wisdom

Receptive, clarity

Leader, uncertain

Stirring, warmth

Shifting, acceptance

Quiet, forgiving

Bouncing, passionate

Purpose, memory

Unyielding, strong

Fortunate, considerate

ANIMAL CHARACTERS

These pictures should be cut up and placed in a pile face down before the larp starts.











Transmigration of Souls - Alex Brown



