



CAROUSEL
By Alex Brown

A solarpunk-inspired blackbox larp for 8-16 players

Length: 4 hours

Minimum materials:

Post-it notes

Tape

Large paper and pens

Mirror ball or lightweight substitute

Mirror pieces

Double-sided tape

Sound system

Spotlight

Optional materials

Fabric - stone coloured

Boxes

String

Plants

Set up

The mirror ball without mirrors should be suspended from the ceiling and stuck with double sided tape. There should be a change in lighting, ideally a contrast between bright for all scenes, apart from Carousel Scene which is dark. There should be a spotlight pointed at the mirror ball for this scene. There is a Spotify playlist for music, a mix of slower ambient tracks for the House Scenes and faster dance tracks for the Carousel Scenes, including the workshop practice. The Wind Chime track will mark the changes of scene between Working Group Scene and Activity Scene

<https://open.spotify.com/playlist/1AOsJpi3SnRWZD18VdKhgP?si=6bd42e5f42ed41ab>

Players will use the props to set up the space in the workshop.

Any instructions in brackets in the workshop are meant as instructions to the GM. The rest is to be read aloud.

Workshop

Setting introduction

The year is... unimportant. It's all at once, past, present and future. It's the age of the anthropocene. Whilst aiming for the goal of economic growth, we've trampled every flowerbed to score it. Injustice, built on the exploitation of nature, animals and people, is poison to the planet. Future historians will call this moment the Great Detransformation, characterised by autonomy, environmental justice, and renewable energy. It's a time for breaking with old systems and hierarchies, finding new ways to live alongside each other.

Without adequate basic needs being met and adequate meaning in their lives, people are turning to alternative forms of living and a new set of communities are emerging across (*your country*). Sun Communes are not a new idea but in the radical way that they are being practised in opposition to, it feels new and unfamiliar to most who join.

Carousel refers to a dance ceremony based on movement meditation. It might be a transition to a new culture, celebration of joy and togetherness, representation of spiritual faith.

Each Carousel ceremony is led by a different group, the youngest characters take their turn to lead the Carousel ceremony first. Before the Great Detransformation, the long period of end-stage capitalism means some values are more entrenched than others and some need time to adapt to new ways of living before they are ready.

There is not a particular hierarchy in the Sun Commune, but those who have led the Carousel ceremony are looked to for leadership.

Take a moment to think about what age you would like your character to be. When you are ready, please stand in a line across the room from youngest to oldest. It is encouraged to discuss in order to find your place in the line.

(Separate the group into 3 or 4 houses according to age, depending on the number of players, at least 2 in each group)

Setting / Fiction

This will be expanded on during the workshop and play but here is a base to begin from:

- Non-hierarchical, however there is a kudos to those who have participated in Carousel ceremony
- Queer identities and relationships are normalised
- Relationships and intimacy are always consensual (in-game and off-game)
- Celebrates cultural difference
- Technology is used for social good

Houses and Characters

Houses

You are closest to those in your house. This is where characters live, hang out, and feel most comfortable to chat. Houses take turns to lead the Carousel ceremony.

Each house is named after an animal or plant. Using post-it notes, each write down 1 or 2 options for your house name and place them together on the floor in front of your group.

Please now vote with a tick mark for 2 options that you like, including your own choices.

Select the one with the most votes.

What are the qualities of this organism that resonate with you? As a group, take 2 minutes to fire off as much as you can.

Creating a character

We will now think on our own about your character's journey to this point and ask yourself these questions:

- Who or what did they leave behind to join the Sun Commune?
- Was it a choice for them?
- What are their hopes and fears of living here?

You will now introduce your character to the others in your house.

Character relations

You moved here a month ago and have recently formed a relationship, or you might have known each other from before. Improvise some character relations by taking in turns to point at one another and state how your character relates to another character.

Work groups

In addition to your houses, characters choose one of 3 working group roles at the Sun Commune. I will summarise each group and everyone should choose one. This will determine what kind of activity your character will be doing in play.

In your work group, you will add some elements of the larp in the workshop, and some will be improvised in play, in work group meetings.

Makers are responsible for designing the space and creative activities.

Carers are responsible for the health and wellbeing of the commune as part of the wider ecosystem.

Facilitators are responsible for creating a community, democracy, and settling disputes.

(players should form 3 groups, can be uneven but make sure at least 2 in each. Give out

Structure

There are 4 cycles (or number of houses), divided into smaller scenes.

- A cycle begins with characters in their house. This time is spent at home to reflect with others on transitions and change.
- The cycle continues with a working group meeting, to loosely structure the next activity in game. There will be time for work and leisure throughout the cycles, it's whatever your characters decide. If it's an activity which involves other work groups,

then let them know. Your characters are free to opt-out of any activity at any time, they can choose individual work activities but still do them together so they can talk.

- At the end of each cycle, is the Carousel ceremony. Each house take their turn to lead the ceremony and it is their official transition into the community. Characters return to their house at the end of the cycle.

Chimes will sound to instruct characters when time moves on from one scene to the next.

To summarise:

- You begin the cycle in your houses, at the end of the song, move to working group meeting
- Working group meeting decides on activities for the cycle, at the end of the scene the chimes sound
- Activity scene
- Lights fade, move to the Carousel ceremony
- You begin the next cycle in your houses

Carousel Ceremony - Workshop

We will practise a little of the Carousel ceremony now. The Carousel is silent movement meditation to music with a focus on breathing. It's perceived to be important in the commune, a sort of transition, it can have any meaning to your character.

Warm up to music - play electronic track

Shake the body and limbs. Rub the hands together, rub other parts of body. Put hands on heart.

....Close eyes, deep breath and relax the body, focus on the breath, how the air flows in and out. Now imagine your whole body breathing. Now just one small part of your body. Now the whole body.

...Starting really small and slow with fingers and hands, move gently with the music, however you wish. Keep your attention on your breath and breath through the body part as you move it

...Feel the energy in your body as the muscles start to move, think about this force field which surrounds your body.

...Try to expand the attention beyond the skin into the electromagnetic field outside your body. Expand the attention, expand the breath, expand the movement.

...Let's try moving between I and we energy, for this you can keep gentle soft focus with the eyes...

....Gently moving the body and keep your attention on the breath, try to become aware of the field of energy surrounding your body. And then move towards the group, almost touching hands but not quite. Then pull away, thinking about your own breath and your own energy... now close, as close as you can without touching.

And.... rest.

Partner dancing is not essential to the ceremony but I want you to think about moving between the state of 'I' and 'we'. What is most important is the focus on the breath and how it connects to movement.

Mirrors

We will use mirrors over the course of the larp to make a disco ball. Mirrors are given outside the ceremony to show appreciation to someone, you can give as many or as few as you wish.

The ceremony begins with the house leading the Carousel sticking mirror pieces on the ball in the middle. The mirrors are collected every time your character is inspired or moved by another character, by their words or their actions. You will each start with some mirrors to give, only those that have been accepted from someone else can be used in Carousel.

The process of leading a Carousel ceremony is a transition into the community, but you can decide what this means to your character.

I will now summarise the ceremony, and then we will go into a quick practice.

- We gather in a circle, join hands and take a deep breath in and out. Release hands.
- The house leading the ceremony is invited to collect mirror pieces and place them on the ball, then stay in the middle, with the rest on the outside
- We will dance to 1 song, focusing on moving the body with breath
- At the end of the song, those who have gone through led the ceremony join those on the outside
- We join hands again and breathe in and out. We move to our houses in silence and begin the next cycle when we reach our houses

I will talk you through each part as we practice it.

(Practice Carousel reading instructions as above)

Safety and intimacy

Brake technique to slow down, cut to stop the game

Consent is practiced in-game for any physical contact apart from the hand holding in Carousel ceremony

Questions

Break

As players return from the break they should go to join houses in their starting positions.

(Bring players into character - ask players to close eyes)

Think about how your character moves, how they speak, why they moved to the Sun Commune, what meaningful relations they have in their house, what they are particularly good at in their working groups, what makes excites them, what makes them scared.

The larp begins with the accompanying music to the house scenes.

The Larp

Follow structure as below

Cycles (Timings should be flexible to what is happening in play but strict enough that it doesn't run too much over time.)

0.00 House scene - play one track - light electronic background track 5 minutes

5.00 end of track begin working group meeting - 5 minutes

10.00 Chimes to begin activity scene - 12-15 minutes

23.59 Turn on ball spot

24.00 Fade lights

24.30 Play Carousel dance track when everyone has arrived

28.00 Carousel ends and go to cycle 2

You can decide whether to do 3 or 4 cycles (ideally so each house can lead the Carousel). You should say aloud when it's the last cycle so players are aware.

Debrief intro

Thanks for playing, that is the end of the larp. We will take a round, each person gives something that was meaningful for your character and something meaningful to you as a player.

End

MAKERS

Read everything through before completing the workshop task.

You take on roles as builders, designers, architects, inventors and artists. You love coming up with new ideas and are passionate about your work, you are very creative and practical. You are occasionally less considerate of more-than-human species and need to be kept in check by the carers.

Makers can be artistic, practical, tricky, adventurous, persistent, passionate, or proud.

In the workshop you are responsible for designing the Sun Commune, use the materials provided in order to build the space how you wish. Each house should have an area marked with tape. You can use props and drawings to represent something else in the fiction.

During play you continue designing the playing space with new building projects and doing creative activities. This might be something your characters do for themselves or they can invite others to join.

Take a round in your group to answer: why did you choose this group for your character and what are they particularly good at?

Once this is complete you should move on to the workshop task, which you will present to the whole group when finished.

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CARERS

Read everything through before completing the workshop task.

You are responsible for the health and wellbeing of the commune as part of the wider ecosystem. You could be sensitive, empathetic, strong, brave, and potentially have spiritual wisdom that some believe could be magic. You could be medics, shamans, environmental stewards, and food growers.

You will be responsible for all relationships with the more-than-human world. This includes food growing, elements of spirituality/faith, healing and medicine. You will look after the farm and the forests, prepare food for the group, and represent animals and non-animals in the community. You are sometimes in conflict with makers' lack of consideration for the more-than-human.

In the workshop, you will design your interaction with the more-than-human world.

As a group, write down which non-human entities you might encounter at the Sun Commune.

Choose one each to represent the needs of (this should be different to your house names). Decide together how and why you communicate with the more-than-human world. This can be a little ritual or meta-technique which allows you to contact your chosen non-human. This can be through touch, speech, movement, song, and can be done together or alone.

During play, you will perform your communication with the more-than-human world. You will also harvest and prepare food for the social event organised by the facilitators.

Take a round in your group to answer: why did you choose this group for your character and what are they particularly good at?

Once this is complete you should move on to the workshop task, you will present to the whole group at the end.

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FACILITATORS

Read everything through before completing the workshop task.

You are responsible for democracy, creating a community, guidance, and settling disputes. You are good communicators and active listeners, able to create solutions in difficult situations. This includes organising meetings and social events, as well as being responsible for creating principles of how the community lives. You are sometimes frustrated with the lack of coordination between the other groups.

In the workshop, write up to 5 guidelines for the community. This can be anything you wish in terms of shaping interaction between characters, but shouldn't contradict the fiction too heavily. Here is a reminder of the fiction, please build on it as you wish.

- Non-hierarchical, however there is a kudos to those who have participated in Carousel ceremony
- Queer identities and relationships are normalised
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- Celebrates cultural difference
- Technology used as social good

During play, you will lead one scene to settle a community dispute, and organise one social event, they can be at any time. You will also make sure the Carousel runs well.

Take a round in your group to answer: why did you choose this group for your character and what are they particularly good at?

Once this is complete you should move on to the workshop task, you will present to the whole group at the end.

Notes from the designer

Carousel is a rite of passage for an eco-community to honour transitions with a dance ceremony. The larp takes inspiration from its namesake scene in Logan's Run, inverting its dystopian nature through ecstatic dance and building mirror balls, under the influence of speculative fiction writers such as Ursula K Le Guin and Marge Piercy. In the decentralised spirit of solarpunk, Carousel is weighted towards collaborative co-design of the community, its social values and activities. By experimenting with transformative ways of organising society and degrowth, there is an invitation for players to reflect on hopes and fears for society and climate.