

Theater LARP Double Feature!

Have you heard of murder mystery parties? How about improv theater or tabletop roleplaying games like Dungeons & Dragons?

If any of these sound interesting to you, you might like theater LARPs / parlor LARPs, which are what you get if you mash up all of those things! Join LARP writer and game runner Olivia Montoya for an evening double feature of short theater LARPs on **September 13, 2025 from 4 to 9 PM**.

This is an event aimed at adults, but parents or guardians may bring teens age 16+ if they are okay with the content involved in the games.

Registration is required. There is space for 12 total players, with a minimum of 5. Participation is first-come first-served in regards to registration. Game #1 requires players to fill out a simple survey that will be emailed out after registration. This is to help the facilitator “cast” you in your role for the game.

Game #1: In the Hall of the Bandit King

Ages: 16+

Players: 5 to 12

Length: 2 hours

You are a bandit. Probably. Your memories seem to have escaped you for the moment. You are seated at a feasting table in the hall of the bandit king Lion’s Jaw, on what seems to be a celebratory occasion... Except it looks like Lion’s Jaw is dead in his chair, and the god of banditry himself has shown up asking you all to name the murderer!

In the Hall of the Bandit King is a murder mystery+amnesia LARP for 5-12 players about a gang of bandits who must recover their memories to solve the mystery of their boss’s death at the behest of the bandit god. Players take on the roles of the bandits of the Lion’s Jaw gang, while the bandit god is portrayed by a GM (game master).

Content Warnings: Many characters in this game take part in murder, casual violence, and fantasy banditry, and some have also been victims of these. The game contains references to spousal murder and familial death.

Game #2 (Option 1): The Stars Whisper

Ages: 16+

Players: 8 to 12

Length: 1 hour and 30 minutes

The Stars Whisper is a LARP where you play the stars in a constellation as they shine in the night sky, over the course of thousands of years. It is low-key and contemplative with potential themes of loneliness, isolation and death, and character topics of Emotions, Essence, Existence, Freedom, Friendship, Goodness and Truth.

As a player, you will be spread around the dimly lit space, only able to whisper to those closest to you, and control the flickering of your light (lights will be provided). Over the course of the game, you develop relationships with the other celestial beings around you, whispering to the stars next to you in the constellation, and perhaps asking them to pass messages to other stars who shine light-years away from you. During play you will develop relationships with the other stars in your constellation as well as news you wish to send or questions you seek to ponder with them. As you communicate with your family of stars, you will together contemplate your luminous, still, and lonely lives over millennia.

After an introduction there will be a short exercise (both totaling less than 20min) followed by the main portion of the LARP and ending with a debrief. Character sheets are templates focused on one of the 7 character topics with a series of open ended questions for players to answer for themselves. Total reading material is about 2 pages, with 1 paragraph read during the game in the dim light using the provided lamps.

Content Warnings: There will be little movement in the game. There is potential content in the game dealing with loneliness, isolation and death which all players need to be prepared to deal with as it cannot be avoided through casting. It is possible the game could call forth intense emotions in some players, including joy, fear, anxiety, sadness, etc. Players control lights which can be made to flash.

Game #2 (Option 2): Sign

Ages: 14+

Players: 4 to 7

Length: 2 hours

Sign is based on the history of Nicaraguan Sign Language. Nicaragua in the 1970s had no official form of sign language. In 1977, something happened. Fifty deaf children from across the country were brought together to a school in Managua. Without a shared language to express themselves, the children did something remarkable—they created one.

In Sign, we follow a story inspired by that journey. There is no spoken or otherwise audible communication during the game. Players will alternate between class and recess, during which they will create a shared vocabulary, experiment with their rudimentary language, and form bonds based on sorely needed communication.

Content Warnings: Discussion of physical disability (deafness) is central to the game, but is limited to deaf characters. The one hearing character (the facilitator's character) may commit microaggressions towards the deaf characters. Character sheets may contain death or illness of family members or pets.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is LARP?

LARP = Live-action Roleplaying

When you LARP, you physically embody a character and do what your character is doing (with some exceptions and abstractions) and improvise actions based on what you think your character would do.

What are parlor / theaterLARPs?

This is a complicated question, because different LARP communities use different terminology, but I chose these two terms to emphasize:

- These games are run inside
- These games don't have live combat
- These games can be run in an afternoon
- These games often involve being "cast" as a character

Here's some more ways to explain it to people unfamiliar with the concept:

- Players are simultaneously performers and audience.
- Some games are kind of like murder mystery dinner parties, but don't always involve a mystery.
- Some games have pre-written plots and characters.
 - This doesn't mean that you have a script.
 - Generally you fill out a survey about the types of play you would like to experience and those you don't want, and get cast as a character.

- Those characters have a personality, backstory, and goals, and you roleplay as that character and attempt to meet their goals.
- Sometimes games involve abstract mechanics.
 - This means representing something you can't do in real life (like magic or actually fighting) with something else (like comparing numbers or dice rolling or rock, paper, scissors)

These games don't involve live combat! No one will be hitting other people or touching them without their consent, or running. Any "combat" between characters will be represented by an abstract mechanic.

Are all parlor / theater LARPs fantasy or mystery themed?

No! This style of LARP is broad and can include games in any genre!

What are some ways these games can be different from each other?

Each LARP scenario is as unique as any other piece of writing.

- They may have pre-written characters and plots.
- Or they could feature instructions/frameworks for creating characters and plots.
- They may run mostly continuously until the game ends.
- Or they may be run in discrete scenes with breaks in between.
- Generally you play a single character per game, but there are exceptions!
- Different games vary in length from about an hour to 8 hours or longer.
- Some games have a set number of characters.
- Other games have a variable number of characters. Often these have a minimum and maximum number of players.
- Some games involve a high level of information transparency, where players know things that characters do not.
- Some games involve a low level of information transparency, where some information remains secret until it is revealed in character.
- Games may vary in emotional intensity.
- Some games may be aimed for different age ranges.
- Some games explore some mature topics, but it has become common practice to signpost the kind of content written into a game or that is likely to come up during play.

Where do these games come from?

Most parlor / theater LARPs are written by hobbyist community members without any expectation of profit. Some are run at conventions, others for clubs, and others for friends at private residences. Many of these communities originated with university clubs.

Who plays parlor / theater LARPs?

People of any age can LARP, but the communities where most of these games come from tend to be mostly people between college age and 70s, with a core age range of 30s-50s.

Some people have been playing and writing these games for decades, as some communities date back to the 1980s!

Some LARP conventions in this region include:

- Intercon (Rhode Island)
- Summer Larpin' (Massachusetts)
- Dice Bubble (New York)
- Time Bubble (New York)
- A LARP Festival (Massachusetts)

Are these games safe to play?

Physically, the most active a parlor / theater LARP will be is to involve dancing of some sort, but not all games involve dancing.

By default, these games will not involve touching other people. Some players may choose to give permission for certain forms of touch (like a handshake, hug, etc.)

Again, there will be no live combat. If someone is in physical danger (about to trip on something, has dropped their glasses, etc.) a facilitator will halt the game until the danger is dealt with.

LARP communities have also developed a variety of emotional safety tools and techniques to discuss and deal with the emotional impact of games. These will be explained by the facilitator before a game begins.