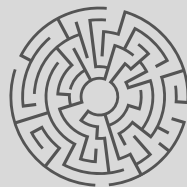


IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE GODDESS

EDU-LARP - Live Action Role Playing
FOR 5-8 PLAYERS



*A journey of transformation and change,
of trials to face and choices to make.*



ERASMUS + WOMEN EMPOWERMENT - TALENT GARDEN -
LOCAL ACTIVITIES - ITALY
Zoè Teatri Aps - Bologna (Italy)
www.zoeteatri.it



Co-funded by
the European Union



"It would never occur to a matriarchal people to regard one sex as inferior or weaker to the other, as it is common in patriarchal societies. The entire world with all 'her' appearances is divine and, therefore, sacred to the people. Every house is sacred and has its holy hearth as a place where the living and the ancestors meet. And each daily task and common gesture has a symbolic meaning, every action is ritualized. If everything is necessary in its own time, the drastic opposition of „good“ and „evil“ makes no sense. In the same way, the female and the male also are a cosmic polarity.

"Heide Goettner-Abendroth "Matriarchal society: definition and theory." Italian translation by Anonima Network, Bologna

"In providing this set of names, we repeat an ancient ritual. These lists(...)are a form of ritual worship. The abundance of manifestations is a characteristic of the archetype, and the plethora of names by which the powers are invoked among all peoples is an expression of their numinous ineffability.

Neumann "The Great Mother. Phenomenology of the feminine configurations of the unconscious.

INTRO

- 3 The project / L.A.R.P.
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- 5 Roles, setting (spaces), materials
- 6 Safety, cornerstone principles, timing

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Women Empowerment is an Erasmus+ project that Zoè Teatri Aps implemented in 2022 with the Slovenian association "Aspira, zavod za razvoj posameznika on družbe" and the Polish organization "Fundacja Wyobraź Sobie "

The local Italian activities included a workshop called "Talent Garden" during which, by incorporating some techniques learned by the other partners during the project, we developed the themes and stories at the center of the Larp "*In the Labyrinth of the Goddess.*"

The women who participated were asked to search for a female deity that inspired them and to present her to the group. Afterwards they were guided to reflect on what life would be like for those goddesses in the modern world, in which they have indeed lost their divine powers, but they still retain their own indoles.

In a world that has forgotten about them, how could they continue to do what they were born to do?

The next step was to strip them of all divine attributes and think about who they could be if they were "normal" people.

We chose to create the characters from the Goddesses because they are archetypal figures, and each one possesses characteristics capable of resonating with the participants. Each character you will play is already the result of a woman's reflection on herself and her own potential; use it to do the same.

This is an activity that each person can do multiple times, because the actions will develop differently each time, based on each participant's choices.

But what is a Larp?

LARP stands for Live Action Role Play.

Each participant plays the role of a character in an imaginary world or situation.

Actions are not only described but must be physically represented. Each action and subsequent reaction, when possible, is represented realistically or it is mimed or, it is simply told in the case of exceptional, unrepresentable or unexpected events.

Live role-playing shares many characteristics with theatrical acting, but it does not take place in front of an audience. Let's say it can be compared to a "playful improvisation" for the use and consumption of the participants only.

The director of the situation is the Game Master.

This figure has the task of directing the game but, unlike a theater director, he or she will have to limit himself or herself to observing, answering the players' questions, and ensuring the course of the game, without interfering in the individual decisions of the players.

The Master may sometimes find himself /herself playing the role of the Great Goddess, should the person for that role be absent.



GETTING READY FOR THEIR GAME

Roles: min players 5 – max players 8 + 1 GameMaster

- Game Master – the person who facilitates the group, by accompanying it through the various stages of the game.
- The 7 shaman women
- The Great Goddess

The term shaman comes from the language of a Siberian people, the Tungusi, and denotes a person capable of mediating between the human world and the supernatural world of spirits, the dead, and deities.

Depending on the ages and cultures, the shaman is given different roles. Some see him as a physician or healer, able to extract from the body of the sick person the substances responsible for the illness or to 'chase' in the afterlife the soul that has left the body of the sick person.

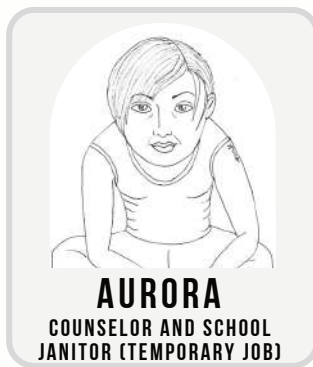
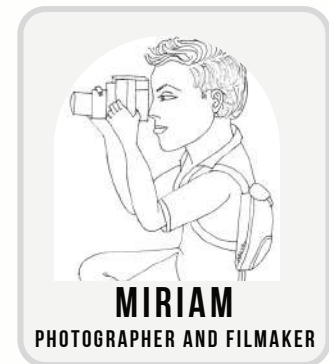
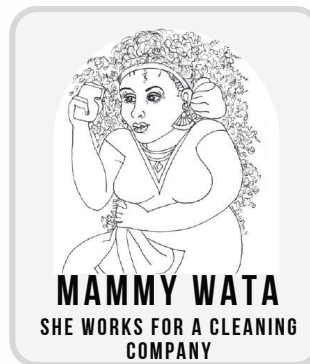
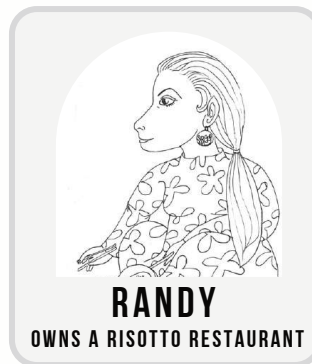
Others see the shaman as a seer, a person capable of predicting the future, providing important information about the course of a battle, or a hunting trip. In other situations, he is seen as someone who accompanies the dead on their journey to the afterlife.

Treccani Encyclopedia



ROLES

7 SHAMAN IN SEARCH OF THE GREAT GODDESS



SETTING

- A large room, big enough to arrange 5-8 chairs in a circle. The perfect solution would be a space that can be divided into two areas, one for the circle of chairs and one where players can move freely.
- Alternatively, the game can be played outdoors in an itinerant fashion, to symbolize the various stages of the journey.
- A mixture of indoor and outdoor environments can be used if available.

MATERIALS

- Character cards, to be given to the players at the beginning of the game
- Chairs
- A tabletop-table
- Various items from which to choose their own sacred object.
- Paper and pen for all players



SAFETY

It is crucial to create a welcoming and non-judgmental space. People are more important than a game. Being safe and feeling safe are not the same thing. The members of a group trust each other when they feel safe, supported by the group and feel that they are cared for.

Therefore, should themes or topics come up, during the game, that might offend the sensitivities of any participant, they should simply make a cross shape with their arms and no other explanation will be necessary.

The Game Master is useful precisely in such cases, to stop the game action in time, without delay.

CORNERSTONE PRINCIPLES

- "Hic et Nunc": the game takes place in the place and time in which the group of players lives and, in the present, not at a time in the past or future or in another country. "
- Getting into the role: to enter the role of a shaman we consider the description at the beginning of the manual (page 4) to be correct. No quantum leap, no magic, made the shamans who they are..

TIME

About 120 minutes total

1. Preparations (15'/20') - welcoming the group; handing out of the character cards; definition of the program (beginning, end, duration); explanation of the agreed-upon signal for safety; people answer the questions on the character card on their own; choice of the sacred object.
2. The Circle of Characters (10') - getting to know the characters: each character introduces him/herself.
3. Beginning of the game (3')
4. First Stage (15'-20')
5. Second Stage (10')
6. Third Stage (10')
7. In the presence of the Great Goddess (15-20')
8. The Choice (5')
9. Epilogue
10. Endgame signal



1) PLAYING THE GAME

15 TO 20 MINUTES

Welcoming of the group; definition of the program (beginning, end, duration); explanation of the agreed signal for safety; handing out of the character cards.

The players who will be playing the role of the shaman (thus excluding the Great Goddess character) answer questions that are useful for building the profile of the shaman-character.

In this phase, the players, do not communicate with each other, but **each person answers the questions on their own.**

Five questions are asked by the Game Master, in the following order:

FIRST QUESTION

You were a shaman, and the Great Goddess gave you a special ability. Which one? Choose one.

- contact spirits
- contact deities
- enter a trance state to see the future
- enter a trance state to see events of the present in another place
- enter a trance state to see the past
- know the history of a place when you are there
- know the history of an object when you have it in your hand

Warning: as a shaman, you were never a sorceress and you never had superpowers! You could see and know, but you could not intervene to change reality.

SECOND QUESTION

You lost your shamanic power the day you forgot the name you used to invoke the Great Goddess.

You do not remember the name you gave the Goddess, but you remember everything about that time when you were known among humans by an epithet (nickname) . What was it?

Write an 'epithet' (ONLY ONE!) on a piece of paper and take it with you.

By epithet we mean an attribution of a quality linked to a talent you possess, a past deed you have performed or a right passed on to you by your lineage.

Eg: She who accompanies, The Punisher, The Liberator of Ghosts, The Daughter of Time.



THIRD QUESTION

Although you have lost your shamanic ability, you have kept two tools from those days when you were the intermediary between the Goddess and the Humans: your shamanic staff and your sacred object.

What does your shamanic staff look like?

Describe it and/or draw it and/or make it.

FOURTH QUESTION

What is your sacred object?

Players choose their own sacred object from those the game master has previously placed on the table.

FIFTH QUESTION

You have used the ability that the Goddess gave you many times, but at some point, in your life, you committed an action for which you still feel much shame and which you have never confessed to a living soul. Since then, you have forgotten the name of your Goddess and can no longer invoke her. You have therefore lost your shamanic ability.

What shameful and unmentionable deed have you committed?



2) THE CIRCLE OF CHARACTERS

10 MINUTES

Each character introduces themselves by saying: name, age, profession, epithet and skill received in the past and now lost. They then describe their shamanic staff.

After this first presentation circle, the Game Master reads this sentence aloud to the players:

"You all know each other because you have had a common initiation. Decide together when and how."

The players 'tell' each other about the event.

3) THE GAME BEGINS

3 MINUTES

The Game Master reads these sentences aloud to the players:

"Before starting the game mute your mobile phone; if you have any doubts or questions ask them now."

"From now on, it is forbidden to speak out of character, unless you are specifically asked."

During the game, if anything should offend your sensitivity, simply make the agreed signal by making a cross shape with your arms."

We can begin."

From now on you will only speak in character.



4) FIRST STAGE

15 MINUTES

The Game Master reads this sentence aloud to the players:

"You are about to embark on this journey together, to reconnect with the Goddess. To resonate with each other, place your sacred object in the centre and say the phrase "this is the sign of my power".

The players place the sacred object they have previously chosen in the centre and - in turn - point to another object. Whoever previously possessed the object, hands it over to the one who pointed it out with the ritual phrase: **"this is the sign of my power, do not disperse its knowledge".**

The Game Master reads this phrase aloud to the players:

"Tomorrow your journey will begin; it is now evening and you are around the fire. Each shaman tells the others about the moment when she felt in spiritual communion with the Goddess, whose name she has forgotten. "

5) SECOND STAGE

10 MINUTES

The Game Master reads this sentence aloud to the players:

"The journey through the labyrinth has turned out to be more difficult than expected. You have lost your way, and no matter how hard you try, you cannot find it again.

Perhaps it is a test from the Goddess, perhaps you need to do something to overcome your discouragement.

Either way, to find your way back to the Goddess, you must reveal to the group the action that caused the Goddess to turn away from you.



6) THIRD STAGE

10 MINUTES

The Game Master reads this sentence aloud to the players:

"Having found your way, you have arrived in front of the Great Temple. Each player describes with one sentence a detail of the scene".

7) IN THE PRESENCE OF THE GREAT GODDESS

15 TO 20 MINUTES

The great Goddess appears and utters this sentence:

"You have come here hoping to remember my name and to acquire new powers. I will decide which of you deserves to keep your epithet. You, Asia, why do you think you deserve the title?"

Asia pulls out the note where she has written her epithet and explains why she is entitled to it. She calls another shaman of her choice to testify. The shaman tells how, thanks to her own skill, she intervened on that occasion to help Asia in the task.

Attention!!! Whoever testifies should not contradict and/or belittle what was said, but only add details.

The Great Goddess decides whether Asia or whoever testified for her deserves the title.

We proceed in this order: Randy, Mammy Wata, Miriam, Aurora, Salima.

Each shaman may be called upon to testify several times and collect several epithets.



8) THE CHOICE

5 MINUTES

The Game Master reads to the players:

Now that the journey is over, you must make a choice:

Do you accept the Great Goddess? Do you reject her? Or is there someone, among you, who wants to proclaim themselves the New Great Goddess?

At my signal you must take a position according to your choice: if you accept the Great Goddess, you take a step forward, if you reject her, you turn your back, if you proclaim yourself the New Great Goddess, you stay in your place.

Now, in silence think about how you feel after this long journey, about the Great Goddess.

Little by little, the name, they had forgotten, will reappear in their minds and at my signal they will invoke her, taking the position that indicates their choice.

At the signal from the Game Master, they'll all invoke her, calling her name and taking their position according to the choice they have made.

Each shaman must decide whether to:

1. accept the Goddess and take a step forward
2. reject the Goddess and turn her back
3. proclaim herself the New Goddess and remain in her place

The Great Goddess says:

"In remembering this set of names, you have repeated an ancient form of ritual worship and the plethora of names are an expression of my luminous ineffability"

The Game Master, observing the positions taken by the players, announces the outcome of the game:

- no shaman has challenged the Goddess and the majority have accepted her: the earthly world and the world of the Goddess reconnect;
- no shaman has challenged the Goddess and the majority has repudiated her: the Goddess leaves and the two worlds are definitively separated;
- only one shaman maintains her position: she is the new Great Goddess;
- more than one shaman has challenged the Goddess: the power struggle throws the earthly world into chaos;



Each shaman must decide whether to:

- accept the Goddess and step forward
- reject the Goddess and turn her back
- proclaim herself New Goddess and remain in her place

The Game Master, observing the positions taken by the players, communicates the outcome of the game:

POSITION

OUTCOME

No shaman has challenged the Goddess and the majority have accepted her

The earthly world and the world of the Goddess reconnect

No shaman has challenged the Goddess and the majority has repudiated her

The Goddess leaves and the two worlds are definitively separated

Only one shaman remain in her place

She is the new Great Goddess

More than one shaman has challenged the Goddess

The power struggle throws the earthly world into chaos



9) EPILOGUE

5 MINUTES

Those who have accepted the Goddess must now say in detail how they will use their newfound skill tomorrow

1. those who have accepted the Goddess return their epithet and sacred object and say why they have accepted it
2. those who have challenged the Goddess give their reasons

The Goddess disappears

The Game Master reads aloud

"Thus ends your journey but first describe how your shamanic staff has changed"

APPENDIX A) VARIANTS

- Building the staff
- build a hat for the Goddess
- instead of choosing the object from those given, each participant brings the sacred object from home.
- instead of choosing the object from those given, they have collected it from the wild



APPENDIX B) CHARACTERS CARDS

IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE GODDESS



ASIA

- **Age** : 28 years old
- **citizenship** : second generation Albanian
- **marital status** : single
- **job situation** : mortuary cosmetologist, you take care of the aesthetic of the dead for their last journey;

answer these questions :

- when did you decide to become a mortuary cosmetologist ?
- why did all the housemates you 've had so far, throw you out of the house?

IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE GODDESS



RANDY

- **age** - 40, but you look 10 years younger;
- **citizenship** - Italian.
- **marital status** - single
- **employment situation** - owner of a Risotto restaurant
- **pets** - a foxhound

answer these questions :

1. why can't you have a stable romantic relationship?
2. how is the risotteria's business going?





MAMMY WATA

- **Age** : 60 years old
- **citizenship** - Italian, born in Mali
- **marital status** - lives with a man; has 2 children, a male aged 40 and a female aged 38 who live far away;
- **employment situation** - works for a cleaning company

answer these questions:

1. In your home country you were an important woman, who were you?
2. Why do people turn to you for advice?
3. What made you leave everything behind?
4. Where do your children live? Why do you see each other so little?
5. Who is the man who lives with you?



MIRIAM

- **Age** : 31 years
- **citizenship** - Italian
- **marital status** - has a long-distance relationship with a man. She lives with her 6-year-old son;
- **occupational status** - photographer and filmmaker, co-founder of an all-women's collective;

answer these questions:

1. you are in a long distance relationship with a man : what did he say or do to bring you back to him when you tried to leave him?
2. Why don't you want to admit to yourself that the long-distance relationship causes you pain?



AURORA

- **Age** : 36 years
- **citizenship** - Italian
- **marital status** – divorced, no children ;
- **occupational status** – two jobs : counselor, temporarily employed as a school janitor

answer these questions:

1. Why does your husband not give you any alimony?
2. How did he defraud you of your family fortune, leaving you only with the foxhound as a souvenir of a wealthy past life?
3. Why are you not able to rebuilt your career as a counselor?



SALIMA

- **Age** : 63 years
- **citizenship** - Egyptian marital status - cohabiting with :
 1. your daughter Bas and her 8-year-old twin daughters
 2. your sister and her two sons;
- **employment situation** - you produce craft beer to cover your arms trafficking;

answer these questions:

1. Why did you make your son-in-law disappear?
2. How do you manage to get respect in a
3. Male-dominated world of arms dealers?



- **Age** : 30 years
- **citizenship** - Italian
- **marital status** - married;
- **pet**: 2 cats
- **occupational status** : harpist, in a symphonic orchestra.

answer these questions:

1. what job does your husband do?
2. Do you have any distinctive flaws, strange, behaviour, slightly annoying habits or any other relevant characteristics in this respect?

NORMA



LA GRANDE DEA

The Great Goddess of Heaven and Creation constantly creates everything and ensures the order of time. She gives birth to all the stars of the east, makes them move across the sky, gives birth to her son the sun every morning and devours him every evening, only to have him reborn.

"It would never occur to a matriarchal people to regard one sex as inferior or weaker to the other, as it is common in patriarchal societies. The entire world with all „her“ appearances is divine and, therefore, sacred to the people. For example, every house is sacred and has its holy hearth as a place where the living and the ancestors meet together and each daily task and common gesture has a symbolic meaning, every action is ritualized. If everything is necessary in its own time, the drastic opposition of „good“ and „evil“ makes no sense. In the same way, the female and the male also are a cosmic polarity "

Heide Goettner-Abendroth : Matriarchal Society: Definition and Theory

APPENDIX C) DEBRIEFING

Debriefing is the time when, at the end of the game, participants are led to reflect on what happened and to share with the group what they discovered; each person can express themselves to reframe their experience and consolidate learning.

The debriefing should be done to help participants to review their experience, to relate it to the real world, to discover useful insights, and to share them with each other. Debriefing also helps to wind down the learning activity, to reduce negative reactions among the participants, and to increase insights.

This debriefing phase is the core and the most important part of the activity, without it "In the labyrinth of the Goddess" is just an amusing activity. The learning and the empowerment will come from the debriefing, so give this moment the right time and space.

The debriefing of "In the Labyrinth Of The Goddess" is structured through six questions, to be asked in order:

1. How Do You Feel?

This question is important to let the participants get free of any feelings that could compromise the later phases of the debriefing. It also helps them to get in touch with their feelings about the activity and its outcomes and it encourages them to share these feelings by actively listening to each another in a nonjudgmental way.

2. What Happened?

This phase aids participants to recollect details about the experience. It encourages people to compare their recollections and to draw general conclusions during the next phase. Ask participants about the highlight of each act, and ask questions about specific events.

3. What did you learn about the female condition?

In this phase, support the participants to generate and test different hypotheses. Ask them to come up with principles based on the activity and to discuss them. Then invite other participants to offer other principles based on their experience.



4. How Does This Relates To The Real World?

Begin with this broad question about the relationship between the experiential learning activity and events in the workplace. Suggest that the activity is a metaphor and ask the participants to offer real-world analogies. Then deepen the reflection by asking questions like “As a woman, have you ever experienced any situations similar to the ones in the game?”, “Do you know women that have faced similar experiences?” Finally, ask “Have you ever been surprised to recognize yourself a talent you had set aside?”

5. What If?

“What would happen if you put to use your forgotten talent into the game?”
Use alternative scenarios to speculate on how people's behaviors would change. Invite the participants to offer their own scenarios and discuss them.

6. What will happen tomorrow? What your next step will be?

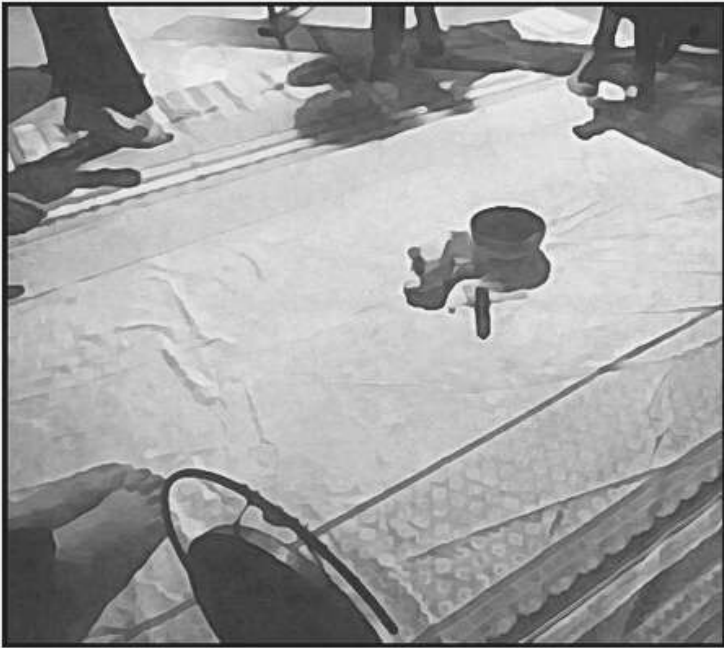
In this phase, ask the participants to undertake action planning. Ask them to apply the insights, from the experiential activity to the real world. Avoid broad, ambitious plans, but focus on small, achievable steps they can all take.

LAST WORDS

We had a great time thinking and developing this EDU-LARP, we hope you will have powerful insights and you will enjoy this activity as much as we did.

Mavi & Paolo





NOTES

date: _____

NOTES

date: _____



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WE EXPRESS OUR GRATITUDE TO

"GRAN PINO SEZ AMICI DELLA NATURA- MARINA DI CECINA" AND "VIDA GAIA- FOCE VARANO"
FOR THEIR HOSPITALITY



IN THE LABYRINTH OF THE GODDESS

The rules of the game