

Good my Lady,

Many thanks for your patience in awaiting this reply. I've given the matter considerable thought, and have decided to frame my response along the lines of what I would want to do if my local group were invited to spend a day demo-ing at the nearest Renaissance Faire.

My first step would be to determine who in the local and/or neighboring groups might be interested in attending. Next, I'd draft a list of the various demo elements I'd like to include, and ask folks who'd already expressed an interest in attending which they'd be able to provide/participate in. I would avoid blanket invitations, in favor of issuing specific invitations and requiring RSVP's. It's crucial to emphasize the seriousness of committing to such a project.

A lot of people in our area have gotten into the habit of attending or blowing off demos very casually, because they're used to straight fighting demos where fighters take the field and any other SCAdians that show up just hang around chatting with each other or any mundanes who get up the nerve to ask questions. While laid back, such demos do not strike me as particularly successful or memorable.

When I had a realistic idea of my resources, I would sit down and try to rough out a schedule. Alternate fighting and/or fencing presentations* with bardic performances, dance sets (perform a dance, teach a related dance, perform the dance you just taught with 'volunteers' from the audience.), and mini-lectures or demonstrations. No one element should last more than ten minutes, unless it involves a high level of audience involvement. Share the projected schedule with your participants ahead of time and post it prominently, in several places, on the day of the demo. Try, as much as humanly possible, to stick to the posted schedule.

Plant pairs of artisans at the outer perimeter of your area. Two scribes can take turns calligraphing children's first names on small business card size stock. Have two spinners or a spinner and a card weaver (or someone with an easily portable inkle loom) working side by side. Can you find two gentles to make rings and assemble chainmail? How about two embroiderers, or leatherworkers?

These people should be willing and able to answer questions not only about what they themselves are doing, but about the other activities planned (each team should have a copy of the schedule) and the SCA in general. They are your guerilla chatelaines. Giving them contact info (business cards survive much better than full page fliers) is a great idea. Thescorre has blue cards which read:

THE SOCIETY FOR CREATIVE ANACHRONISM, INC.

The S.C.A. is an international, non-profit organization dedicated to recreating the best of the Medieval and Renaissance eras (c.400-1600 AD). Members study and enjoy many aspects of the history and culture of those times, including: music, dance, mock combat, archery, armoring, heraldry, embroidery, costuming, calligraphy, feasting, brewing, etc. If this sounds interesting to you, you are welcome participate. For further information, just contact the person listed on the back of this card.

(Your group can list the Seneschal, Chatelaine, or an alternative contact. Having the local Knight Marshal, Dance Master/Mistress, and other Guild/Practice Leader's contact info available is also a good idea.

By the way, I emphasize working in pairs because that allows one gentle or the other to take a break, hit the johns, fetch food/drink, or check in with other demo participants, while the other remains available to the populace. It also helps deal with the occasional “crunch” when the audience seems apt to overwhelm you, asking more questions and demanding more attention than one person can manage. It also makes stepping away for a minute (for any of the reasons mentioned above) much easier, since you don’t have to secure all your gear or worry about it “walking off”.

To get back to the fighting, you might consider running it along the lines of a “Warlord Tourney.” Make the first round single combats with a variety of weapons forms. Encourage the fighters to introduce themselves and identify the weapons form they are using, or the type of armor they wear. Have them request favors from on-lookers. Ham up the salutes and charges. Winner of each bout becomes the leader of a two man team composed of himself and his former opponent. The second round matches up the two man teams, which give way to four man teams, and so on, until the grand melee. If you don’t have many fighters, schedule additional “other” activities between bouts. LOTS of fighters? Make the activities between bouts briefer.

Do you have a Comedia Troup? A Recorder Consort? A piper? A juggler? Rotate such performances with the combats. Get everyone to practice introducing themselves as outlined in the Talk Panel portion of the ADEPT manual. Everyone, from the waterbears on up should be prepared to speak for a moment or two concerning who they are, when and where they’re from, and what it is they’re doing.

Consider scripting a chronological “fashion show”, giving the names for various garments being worn, and pointing out the differences in style from the earliest to latest periods represented and from country to country.

How’s that for a wealth of possibilities? Is any of this what you were looking for?

Please let me know how it goes.

Sincerely, Daedra McBeth a Gryphon