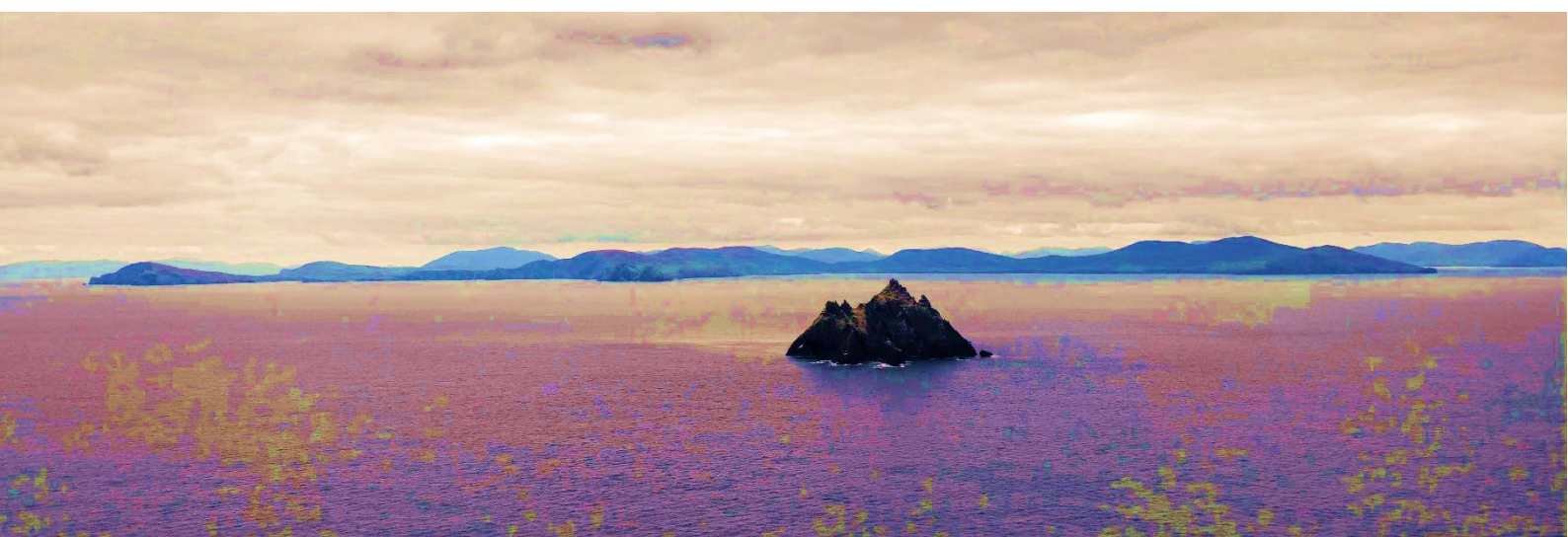


2022
Lauri Lukka

Superrealism

**A music-driven embodied
role-playing experience
of losing and finding oneself**

In a remote country house, you hesitate. The esoteric new-age self-development seminar is about to begin. Promptly, the escalating ceremony leaves your ego behind. Together, you look for the mystical Mountain across curious, associative, symbolic, and synesthetic planes. Do the participants ever meet the Blackbird? Do they find the present?



Contents

Contents	2
Synopsis.....	2
Game information	3
Before the game	4
Welcome.....	4
Workshop part 1: Listening to your character	5
Workshop part 2: Listening to others	6
Recap.....	7
The game.....	8
Debrief	12

Synopsis

In a remote country house, you hesitate. The esoteric new-age self-development seminar is about to begin. Promptly, however, the escalating ceremony leaves your ego behind. The spiritual pilgrims begin to hungrily explore the associative, symbolic, and synesthetic planes of remedy. Whisper! Mumble! Cry out!

Far in the distance, the Mountain grows and growls. To find its heart, the pilgrims need to traverse surrealist scenes of avant-garde innovation. Gratefully, they are aided. The music of the world is their wind, their bodies are the wings. Pace! Skip! Swirl!

Yet, the path is uncertain. Will the pilgrims ever find the Blackbird of the Ridge, the infinite emotional expression of self-dissolving unity, the moment that they could call the present?

SUPERREALISM is an experimental music-driven game about looking for and finding. The game is played without verbal expression through embodied expression.

Game information

Style:	Live-action role-playing game in the scenario tradition
Keywords:	Embodied expression, experimental, music-driven
Number of game masters:	1
Number of players:	6+ (upper limit defined by the game space)
Duration:	3-4h
Recommended outfit:	Flexible that allows movement.
Materials needed:	Printed game materials (this document) Characters (an appendix) High-quality loudspeakers and music list 2-5 rolls of tape Rocks, preferably brick-sized, one per player Egg shaker, one per player Blindfolds, one per player

Theoretical sidenote

Many role-playing games are about immersion into a role and making meaningful decisions through the narrative. This game breaks this fundamental. The players are invited to dissolve their characters and *express* the narration the game master guides them through. Considered from a role-play theoretical point-of-view, the game pushes the boundaries of gameness asking: 1) If the character of the player is dissolved, are they still playing a role-playing game? 2) Where do meaningful experiences arise? While these questions are of lesser importance than the experience the game produces, they may open new avenues in reflecting the experience and the design.

Writer bio

Lauri Lukka is a designer, researcher, and clinical psychologist. Since 2011, he has designed numerous scenarios including Prelude, The Desperate, Mikodine XA, and Forgiveness. He is particularly interested in crafting experimental scenarios that explore the medium. Lauri writes on the psychology of games and works on his Ph.D. on therapeutic digital games for mental health at Aalto University, Finland. Correspondence: lauri.m.lukka@gmail.com

Before the game

Welcome

- **Attunement.** Welcome the players to the space. Play the song in the background.
 - **Rainbow Spirit Oregon – Let the way of the heart shine thru**
 - **Optional.** Share shakers and invite singing at the chorus. After the song, ask the group: How did that feel? Explain how they now know the key mechanisms of the game: interpretation of music.
- **Offer an overview of the game**
 - **Non-verbal embodied expression.** In many games, the story is played through dialogue. Today, we play without words. Rather, we express ourselves with bodies, voices, movements, breathing, and dance. All players may not be familiar with this – no worries, we will go through this in the workshop.
 - **The story as a narrative of songs.** The story of the game is told through a series of connected scenes, each taking the duration of one song. In total, there are roughly 20 scenes, and each song takes roughly 2-8 minutes. Each scene begins with a game master's instruction that sets the frame for interpreting the song. Then, it is the emotion, theme, and mood of the song that guides you through the scene, where the pace of the game adapts to the song.
 - **Group over the individual.** The interpretation of the scenes is done together. In the game, we are playing not only as individuals but also as a group, and we should listen, adapt, and be inspired by others. We will practice this before the game.
 - **Influences.** The game is influenced by improv, contact improvisation, 5Rhythms, Authentic Movement, and mindfulness. Yet, the game provides you with characters, an overarching story, and props to guide you through the story.
 - **The props.** Throughout the game, there are four key themes and props that are used:
 - **Stone.**
 - **Egg shaker.**
 - **Blindfold.** Used in the game.
 - **Character.** These are distributed in character selection.
 - **Summary.** The game is played by interpreting the instruction and the songs that weave together into a story as individuals, and vitally, together as a group.
 - **Questions.** Any questions from the players are answered
- **Safety considerations.** The game is experimental and experiential. Therefore, it is important to go through safety considerations explicitly.
 - **Voluntariness.** The players participate in their game voluntarily and may end the game at any point.

- **Boundaries.** Players are encouraged to keep their boundaries in mind. This game may intentionally push them, and the player is responsible for being mindful of them.
- **Safety mechanics.** If the game is too intense, showing *both palms to the other person* indicates to other players that the play shouldn't anymore intensify; and *crossing hands in an x* means that the play should pivot to softer, considerably less intense topics.
- **Game process.**
 - **Workshop.** The aim is to warm up and gain a sense of the key mechanics of the game. The workshop consists of two parts: first alone, then together. The duration of the workshop is roughly 1-1.5 hours.
 - **The game.** The game consists of roughly 20 scenes, taking roughly 1.5-2 hours.
 - **Debrief.** We dedicate some 15-30 minutes for debriefing after the game.

Workshop part 1: Listening to your character

- **Aim.** Introduce the characters and warm up to moving about.
- **The setting.** The setting of the game is that the characters have arrived at an experimental new-age ceremony in a remote country house. They do not know each other before the game
- **Starting character.** Next, you can choose your characters. However, this is only the beginning. You may be asked to adopt other characters during the game.
- // Put the characters on the ground for players to browse and choose.
- **Choose a character.** Browse through the characters and choose one.
- **Fold into the pocket.** When everyone has chosen a character, fold the picture and put it in your pocket or somewhere else where it is available to you.
- **Walking.**
 - The players walk in the room freely. Invite the players to focus on themselves and to walk in a way that feels comfortable to them. The players are free to stretch while walking.
 - Now, remember the picture of your character – Move as they would.
 - Now, remember the words of your character – How would they influence the movement?
- **Intro to “dancing”.** When we talk about dance, we are talking about movement.
 - **Improvised.** There are no steps to learn.
 - **Observe.** Observe your inner process.
 - **Non-judgmental.** Thus, there is no right or wrong.
 - **Expressive.** The aim is to express yourself, the music, and the story.
- **Practice.** Listen only to yourself, and your character, and find what the music is trying to tell you. Express it as you feel comfortable. You may do it with minimal movements, such as moving your hands.
 - **Olafur Arnalds – Happiness does not wait**
- **Reflection:** How did that feel?

Workshop part 2: Listening to others

- **Aim.** In this game, we combine three things to make scenes:
 - We **listen to** others in the group
 - We **interpret** the game master's scene instructions
 - We **adapt** to the music.
- **Simultaneous stopping.** Walk together and the players are asked to stop at the same time without anyone particularly initiating the stop. Repeat 3-7 times as necessary.
- **Human knot.** Go in a circle. Each person takes one random person by the hand with her right hand and does the same with their left hand. Without speaking, the players try to untangle themselves without breaking contact with their hands.
- **Theater machine.** Next, we will create a machine that consists of different parts that interrelate. Each part has a simple movement. The parts are added one at a time. The exercise is repeated 1-2 times.
- **Interpretation of a song.** Next, we are creating different scenes without talking, merely by expressing ourselves. I will give you music and a short description of the scene for you to interpret. You have full two minutes to create the scene—you do not need to hurry. Take your time, enjoy, and work with others. You may, for instance, create families and friendships in the scene.
 - **Scene 1: Carter Burwell – The book**
On the pier of a small coastal town. The families are gathered to say farewell to those who are leaving, perhaps never to return.
- **Interpretation with progress.** Now that we know how to create an ambiance, we will make it more dynamic. To do this, you need to listen and adapt to the changes in the song. How the scene begins is not the same as how it ends. Remember to take your time, enjoy the music, and collaborate. The duration of the scene is 2.5-3 minutes.
 - **Scene 2: Einaudi – Einaudi:Experience (stop 3min)**
In the engineering workshop, studious clockwork-makers are working with minute details. The work is studious, engaging, and detailed. Yet, through the scene, they grow more and more worried. Will they get the work done in time? Will they make the deadline?
- **Sound together.** We can also use our bodies to make music. We can use our feet, hands, and our voices. Let's try making rain.
 - **Rain.** The players are instructed to make rain by tapping their hands on their thighs. First, the rain is droplets, then it grows more intense, and to full flow. Finally, the rain quiets down.
 - Next, let's try using our voices.
 - **Scene 3: Enya – Boadicea**
- **Move together.** There are numerous ways to move together. We will practice one way; however, you are free to improvise! The key here is to listen to yourself, the other person, and the music. When we practice, we can have one person leading, and the other person following. Next, I will show an example of how to do this.
 - **Scene 4: No Spirit & Tonion – Running Out of Time**
 - *Practice improvised dancing with a partner.*

Recap

- **The flow.** The story of the game consists of scenes with a duration of a song. In the scenes, you combine
 - The verbal introduction and instructions that may also invite you to adapt new characters and use the props
 - The song that may itself evolve
 - Adapt and interpret with the group around you
- **Questions.** Questions before the game?
- **Break.** 5-10 minutes.
- **Note to the GM.** An appropriate duration for the scenes depends on the experience and playstyle of the group as well as its size. Pay attention to the pace the game correctly cutting the songs when needed.

The game

1. The waiting room

- a. Ensure everyone has their character with them folded in a pocket.
- b. The game begins with the players lying on the floor.
- c. Max Richter – Flowers of Herself**
- d. Slowly, the expectant travellers wake up in a lounge, waiting for the departure. Around them is a room full of strangers, and other pilgrims, equally expecting for the unknown flight.
- e. (2min) In their pockets, they find their passport photo. They take the time to feel how it moves them.
- f. (~4min) Amongst the strangers, they make the effort to get acquainted. Using the pictures to introduce themselves to each other, one after another. Equally, it is an effort to prove that this is, in fact, me. It is me: someone that had forgotten in their sleep. It is me!

2. The wall of faces

- a. // Share tape rolls
- b. Detektivbyrån – Life_Universe**
- c. Now that everyone is accounted for, they are amongst friends. To bless their journey, the pilgrim and the travellers make up an altar: in a slow dance, one by one, they attach their pictures to the wall. It is a portrait. Finally, they gather before it in a holy mass.

3. The hymn

- a. Daft Punk – Overture**
- b. As the altar is finished, the pilgrims gather in front of the serene beauty. They harmonize their voices in a hymn.

4. Story of the Mountain

- a. Glass: Aguas da Amazonia – Metamorphosis I**
- b. As their voices reach their peak, the waiting room disappears and the reality around them crumbles away. Do you hear it? The wind in the trees. It is picking up, moving through the autumn leaves that softly bend with the wind. It is light, and gentle, and the rays of the sun pass through the canopy. Do you hear the song the wind sings? Do you hear what the wind tells you...
- c. Once, there was a humble soul, watching the eternal fields of grass. Their hair blows in the wind. What they wanted was so far, far, far away from the village that burned behind them that the humble soul asked the wind to take them away.
- d. At that moment, the very heart of the earth granted the wish. The words of the young soul became the wind, their hair became the wind, and their body as well. They became a soft breeze in the autumn... Flying across the landscapes, the spirit saw their village far down below, waving them farewell as they soared across the sky, and flew towards the mighty mountains far in the distance.

- e. You see it as well. The great Mountain is far in the distance. The mountain you long for, where you may meet the Blackbird. It is then you begin the arduous, strenuous trek... (~6min)

5. The trek

- a. **Talamasca – Day Dreaming**
- b. It is then that you begin your trek across the landscapes, and you fall into your mind as you do so, into a trance.
- c. It is until you all collapse from exhaustion...

6. Finding the rock

- a. **Kammarheit – The Starwheel**
- b. As you again emerge into consciousness, you find yourself at the Mountain—deep within the Mountain. It is where the sullen and deformed dark dwarves live mining the mountain, and eating it from within, one rock at a time. You consume the rock, leaving behind vast, empty halls.
- c. You, the dark dwarves, are lonely creatures. You work together, but each to their end, searching for the rock. Their rock. They want to find the rock. To celebrate the rock. To own their rock.
- d. // Lay out the rocks across the area at the end of the scene
- e. What they didn't know, was the whisper of the rock. They listened intently. They were finding the name of the rock. Learning its name, learning the spell, the forbidden words, the secrecy in of the eternal rock.

7. The work

- a. **UNKLE – Celestial Annihilation**
- b. Having learned the name of the stone, the dwarves become a slave to them. They follow the orders of the stones. They moan and murmur the names and swallow them. Working to obey the command of the stones, the stones work the dwarves to the flesh and bone. The stones want to be stacked, piled, and constructed, again and again.
- c. (4min) Overwatching all of this is the high lord of pain, Neon Metal.

8. The gatherers

- a. **Olafur Arnalds - Momentary**
- b. On the mountain side, an old couple is gathering the last frozen berries from the rocky ground. The year has been a tough one for the couple, and winter is soon upon them. Yet, they support each other in their quest, finally withdrawing to the small hut on the side of the mountain as the evening draws near.

9. The candle

- a. **Olafur Arnalds – nyepi (choir version)**
- b. Inside the cabin, a candle sits between the two elderly. It is flickering, and the two are crouched to watch its small, intense, flame. It is their last candle, and after it burns, there are just the two of them in the darkness.
- c. Their voices seek the flame. They give thanks to the flame, for being there. Before the darkness comes and takes them away... the other takes the blindfold, and invites the darkness in.
- d. Then doing the same for themselves. And both are blind, but holding hands.

10. Losing each other

- a. **Mount Shrine – The Silence Between Our Houses**
- b. The darkness around them is deep, uninviting, abhorrent. It is as if it was a creature, dark and thorny, that is pulling the two apart. The two fall ever further from each other, losing each other to the dark.

11. The voice

- a. **Dead can dance – Host of seraphim**
- b. Now, they are lost. Where are they? Where are they? From the darkness, there calls a voice. A voice of stone, deep from the earth. The name of the stone, their own stone.
- c. They feel the greed arouse. They want to hold it in their hands, but they only finding other grasping hands, other flailing hands, but the stone, where is the stone? They call out! Where is it... what it is that they are looking for.

12. The egg

- a. **Ryan Teague – Recursive iteration III**
- b. Then, they feel it. There is something great watching them in the dark. They need to be very, very, very quiet not to stir it.
- c. (1.5min) Somewhere, the stone calls. And their seeking hands, they find something else. Yet, they when they find it, they must be silent, absolutely silent not to awaken the Beast. They must be careful not to break it. They carefully move about in the darkness.
- d. // Share shakers one by one until games

13. The rhythm

- a. **Curawaka – Noku Mana**
- b. Finally, they can sigh the relief. They have lost the Beast and its heavy breathing.
- c. Now, they listen to the rhythm, the pulse within the egg. The soft rhythm of the soul. With it, they comfort what they have found, and it comforts them in return.
- d. (5:45) Their ritual blesses them. They find another person, with them, the other helps them see. Slowly, they help each other see by removing the blindfolds.
- e. All together, make a holy nest, by placing the eggs and their blindfolds in the middle. In a circle, they make a protective circle around them.
- f. // Gather eggs and blindfolds in a central basket

14. Relax

- a. There it is. The perfect silence. There is so much to listen, in that silence. (~1min)
- b. **Kent – Då Sin By För Alltid**
- c. Yet, it doesn't last long. The deep dwarves hear it again, the call to work. Call to march. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four.

15. Neon Metal Attacks

- a. **Röyksopp – Bounty Hunters**
- b. It is the attack of the master of the dwarves, the Neon Metal. The compulsion. The anger. The purge.

- c. (2min) Then, they fixate on the pictures on the wall. Those useless caricatures. They are worthless, insignificant, cheap, despicable, meaningless, false! One by one, they pick the false idol, and rip them into little pieces, throwing them across the room.
- d. // Pictures ripped from the wall.
- e. (5min) Celebrating on the grave of the inferior trash. The only thing left in is the raw emotion.

16. The regret

- a. **Tom Holkenborg - Survive**
- b. After the purge, someone is watching all the broken pieces. Condemning the mess that has been made. That picture, it is never coming back.
- c. **Tom Holkenborg - Escape**
- d. Can they fix it, the broken pieces? It doesn't work! The pieces are torn and lost, and the picture forever broken. With it, they feel the shackles around their wrists.
- e. // They players tie the blindfolds as shackles around their wrists

17. The burden of worms

- a. **Kjartan Sveinsson – Teil I**
- b. // Reintroduce the stone
- c. Like the broken pictures, they are defeated and worn out. From the frozen earth, the stones emerge. A burden to carry to the eternity. Each burrowing in their stone. (~3min)
- d. With the stone, are melting into the ground like the broken pieces around them. Without energy, they fall to the ground, and through it, into the soil. They are reduced to worms, in the deep layers of the earth. Writhing, they are leaving the pictures far behind them, an attempt to forget.

18. The dying heart

- a. **Michael Giacchino – Locked out again**
- b. As they have buried themselves all the way down, under the ground, beneath the mountain, and even deeper into the very core of the earth. Together, they find the heart of the earth. It is barely beating... It is made of their stones.
- c. The worms comfort the very earth, the weeping heart of the mountain whose death would be the end of all beauty. To keep it warm, the worms gather the broken pieces of the pictures, to give solace to the heart.

19. Warhammer

- a. **Two steps from hell – Victory**
- b. Deep within the mine, the slaves of the Neon Metal, the deep dwarves strike their anvils. Their hands, feet, and mouths are dry, and strike their anvils in compulsion, breaking the rocks. Obeying the command.
- c. (2min) Deep down, they hear a beat. And each strike changes, with each strike they are breaking a stone, they are breaking free. With each strike, there is a release. Release from their shackles.
- d. // The blindfolds used as shackles are removed.
- e. One by one. They hear the call from above. Leaving their anvils, and seeing the first ray of sun after the polar night.

20. Sunrays

- a. **Silence.**
- b. Above the mountain, the skies are clear, and the sun is bright, brilliant, and intense, blazing its golden glory. The soft breeze caresses the treeline and the skin of dwarves that have emerged from beneath the ground.
- c. Within one of those trees, there is a lonely egg. Sitting, all by itself with no sign of the mother bird. Closing in, we can hear the very faint beat. The very faint beat...
- d. **Marija Serifovic – Molitva**
- e. (1:30) They spread their wings, they fly oh so high. They soar above the landscape, higher and higher. Seeing the Blackbird flying with them. Feeling the wind under their wings, seeing the treetops beneath their wings.

21. Together

- a. **Rainbox Spirit Oregon – Let the way of the heart shine thru**
- b. // Distribute the eggs
- c. Together, we see the spring rising.

Debrief

- **1-1.** Ask the players to form pairs and reflect on the experience.
- **Circle.** One sentence per player from the game.
- **Clap.** End the experience with one synchronized clap.