

Entertainment

Ethel Simmons editor/644-1100



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Revelers garbed for Renaissance

The Michigan Renaissance Festival runs seven consecutive weekends: Saturdays-Sundays Aug. 12-13, 19-20 and 26-27; Saturdays-Mondays, Sept. 2-4, and Saturdays-Sundays, Sept. 9-10, 16-17 and 23-24, at the shire of Holmgrove in Holly. Hours are 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. For ticket information call 645-9640.

By Kevin Lawrence
special writer

IT'S AUGUST, 1550. The King and Queen have invited you to feast with them and you're getting ready.

Remember, it's not every day one is invited to dine with the King and Queen. Don't be late. But don't be the first nobility over the drawbridge, either.

And gentlemen, be careful you don't mist that last button on your doublet (vest). Make sure your skirt is straight (yes skirt), and that your jerkin (ancient suit coat) has been to the cleaners recently.

Ladies, allow yourself plenty of time to get ready. Remember, it takes more than three hours for a lady to be properly coiffured and dressed in a bum roll (big is better), corset (at the same time - smaller is better, too), petticoats, floor-length skirt with hoop, bodice with detachable sleeves, stomacher (outer bodice), collar and hat.

MOVING FORWARD from 1550 to 1989, there is still occasional debate on what one should wear and how long it should take to dress. But you can come as you are to the 10th annual Michigan Renaissance Festival and enjoy the general merrymaking and, of course, the authentic costumes worn by more than 400 craftspeople and entertainers.

Barbara Logan of Royal Oak, a former Farmington Hills resident, is marketing director for the festival group, which is housed in a small, downtown Birmingham office. "People really aren't sure what the Renaissance Festival is," she says. "But the brave go and have a great time. Our exit polls indicate 98 percent of our guests will return. And they tell their friends. Last year, over our seven weekends, 130,000 people attended the festival."

The Renaissance festival is an accurate re-creation of a 16th century European village during a harvest celebration. Continuous entertainment (merrymaking) fills the nine-



Costumed in the royal manner are Carol O'Connell as Princess Viola and Rick Frederick as Prince Reginald at the 10th annual Michigan Renaissance Festival.

acre festival site on a wooded clearing in Holly.

The village is peopled by jesters, servers, wenches, dancers, mimes, magicians, jugglers, puppeteers, minstrels, knights, lords and all manner of townsfolk. Craftspeople from pickle sellers to glass blowers to clothesmakers offer their wares for sale. But to be truly accurate, the "villagers" need to look the part.

"With over four hundred costumed participants, you can imagine the cost involved," said Logan. "That's why, except for the principles, everyone provides their own clothing."

A COSTUME can cost the Renaissance \$75 to \$300, depending on the degree of elaborateness. And also depending on the character to be

portrayed, because in Renaissance times, as one's social station rose, more elaborate fashion was dictated. Keeping up with the Joneses originated in the fashion world of the Renaissance.

"As the middle class developed, they wanted to look like and started to wear the fashions of the wealthy," said Laurie Dunforth of Rochester, one of the costume designers for this year's festival. "Many folks back then put almost their entire fortune into the clothes and jewelry they wore."

Dunforth is a free-lance costume designer whose work has appeared at the Music Hall and Attic Theater



JERRY ZOLYNSKY/staff photographer

What do the simple folk do . . . Michael Short of Troy, entertainment director for the Michigan Renaissance Festival, and Ann Pachota of

Ann Arbor, assistant entertainment director, wear peasant costumes at the festival opening this weekend in Holly.

and in the Oakland University production of "Amadeus." She also has been head of the costume department for the Detroit Institute of Arts' Wassall meal.

"We want to be as authentic as possible. And since patterns really don't exist for this type of clothing, I research extensively," Dunforth said.

Two costumes she worked on for the festival are for upper-class characters and have taken an average of 60 hours each to complete. "Working with clothing of this period is especially difficult because of the thickness involved for an accurate look. Textiles were crude back then and without the benefit of central heating, thicker clothes were a necessity," she said.

EVEN MORE important to the people of the time, Dunforth explained, was that they didn't want to look as if they had to work. Thus, the more layers of clothing they wore, the more money it was thought they had.

Costuming for the Renaissance Festival has to be extremely heavy duty in construction because it takes a lot of wear and tear. Dunforth favors modern materials like cottons and polyesters.

"As with anything else, budget determines many priorities. In theater, upholstery fabrics are used for their thick look, but they're heavy and not

Festival sells wearables

Handmade clothing and accessories are available for purchase at the Michigan Renaissance Festival. The items include the following:

Flowered and dried-flower garlands
Large, beret, floppy hats
Tall, cone "Damsel in Distress" hats
Shirts

Dresses
Leather pouches
Cloaks
Belts
Carved wood staffs

Prices range from under \$10 to the most expensive at \$500 for handcrafted and fitted leather boots fit for a king.

all that comfortable to wear. And the festival people wanted the right look but the garments had to be washable. I want a bit overboard on these. They're some of my best work. I just wanted them right. I made undergarments like the bum roll (makes hips look larger) and a collar and hat on my own time because when the actress steps into this, I want her to feel the part. It's just great seeing an actor get so excited about his or her role when they get into an outfit."

The jester wasn't kidding when he recommended costume designer Mary Musinski of Detroit to the Renaissance Festival management.

"It's true, I'm on a referral from the jester," said Musinski. She runs her own clothing design and production studio in downtown Detroit

where she manufactures a clothing line for women that is distributed locally. Her work has appeared in the movies "The Rosary Murders," "Collision Course" and in smaller production companies around town.

MUSINSKI WORKS primarily in middle-class clothing for the Renaissance, although one of her favorite costumes she has done for the festival is for royalty, the Queen Mother. "Eighty percent of this costume is older drapery fabric, which I've lined with more contemporary fabric for comfort," she said.

She finds much of the fabric she uses for period costumes at going-out-of-business sales, treasure shops and garage sales.

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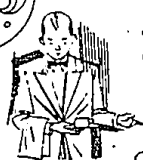
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