

arts

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KAI BRITO / CLARION

Madison College student Joan Keizer crafts armor that gets put to the test in Historical European Martial Arts events.

Forging a living manuscript

Historical knighthood is resurging in Wisconsin

KAI BRITO
Copy Editor

Not every college student can say that they own a set of self-forged plate armor, but Joan Keizer can shoulder that honor. Over the summer, about once a month on Saturday mornings, she dons her metal suit and engages in battle with other armor enthusiasts around Wisconsin.

Keizer is a Liberal Arts transfer student at Madison College. She is a student of history, spending her free time reading manuscripts from the Middle Ages.

She strives to find a balance between being a responsible scholar of the past and putting that knowledge to practice in the modern era.

Like many young children, she had what she calls a “knight phase,” where she developed a fascination with the fashion and armor styles of ironclad warriors. She pursued that interest, crafting her first armor piece by the time she was in middle school. Since then, she has forged sallets (helmets), breastplates, longswords, and various other knightly equipment.

When Keizer constructs armor or weapon pieces, she is very mindful that she is dealing with past artifacts. She does her due diligence to research historical techniques to corroborate her design ideas and achieve a result that more closely models the past.

“Between practicing those techniques, using the same tools, and using a rule set that puts the same



PHOTO PROVIDED BY JOAN KEIZER

Armor, such as this helmet, is crafted to closely replicate items worn in the Middle Ages.

pressures on us, then we can get closer to what [knights] might have done historically,” Keizer said. “That’s the idea at least, to replicate as closely as we can with the knowledge that we’ll probably never get to a satisfactory point,” she continued.

But Keizer does not just construct pieces to display. That armor gets put to the test in multi-combatant team Historical European Martial Art skirmishes, otherwise known as HEMA.

HEMA events are organized armored-combat skirmishes that can include fighting as teams in

both free-form and pre-arranged battles, as well as traditional one-vs-one duels. The events are hosted across South Central and Southeast Wisconsin, sometimes even in Keizer’s own backyard.

These large-scale battles operate under the “Keizerburg Rule System,” a modular rules system devised by Keizer that determines the rules of engagement on the battlefield.

Each weapon and armor class receives a rating of “Heavy,” “Medium” or “Light” and those rating classes should be used against a matching class or below.

For example, using a Light Weapon class dagger against a Heavy Armor class Plate Mail would not be a wise decision. But using a Medium Weapon class polearm against a Medium Armor class leather padding would be a fair match up.

Keizer is a versatile arms user but tends to gravitate towards weapon classes like longswords or rapiers that lend themselves to a little more finesse. However, when it comes to armor types, she is often sporting a full set of Heavy armor plate mail with parts forged directly from her workshop.

Keizer attests to the safety that heavy armor offers for combatants. She emphasizes that safety is a main priority for all participants and that they are engaging in friendly duels to put historical knowledge into practice.

“Ultimately, we’re all friends here, so at the end of each fight we hug each other and make sure everyone is okay,” Kaiser affirmed. “At the end of the day, we just want to play, and we can’t play if we break each other,” she said.

The next scheduled HEMA skirmish is called “Keizerburg,” and is set for Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023, at 10 a.m. The event will be hosted at 2098 County Road K, Monroe, WI 53566.

Performing Arts program plans 2 shows this fall, musical in spring

PAIGE SHAPIRO
Opinion Editor

The Madison College Performing Arts is presenting a play called “The Women of Lockerbie” in October, another play called “Bus Stop” in December and a musical called “Rock of Ages” in March.

Karen Saari, communication and performing arts instructor, is showcasing “The Women of Lockerbie,” a play inspired by real events this fall from Oct. 13-22 in Madison College’s Mitby Theater. Ticket prices are \$15, but students at Madison College who have a

One Card get free admission.

“The Women of Lockerbie,” written by Deborah Brevoort, is inspired by a real event. Taking place in the ‘80s, there was a terrorist attack bombing on an American plane called Pan Am 103 that rained over a small, quiet town called Lockerbie, Scotland. The play follows a grieving mother whose child passed away from the attack, who then finds these women who are trying to reclaim from the United States government the belongings of the people who passed away in the town, so that they may return the belongings to the

victims’ families.

The play has one student as the lead, one student understudy and several students working tech. There will also be some area, community and professional actors working in the show, as well as several designers and guest artists in the community.

The play “Bus Stop” is still looking for students to audition. There is a cast of seven, but they would like to have more students in the production. “The Rock of Ages” auditioning is still to be deter-



PHOTO PROVIDED TO THE CLARION

Jessica Witham rehearses a scene from “The Women of Lockerbie” in the Truax Campus studio theater.

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