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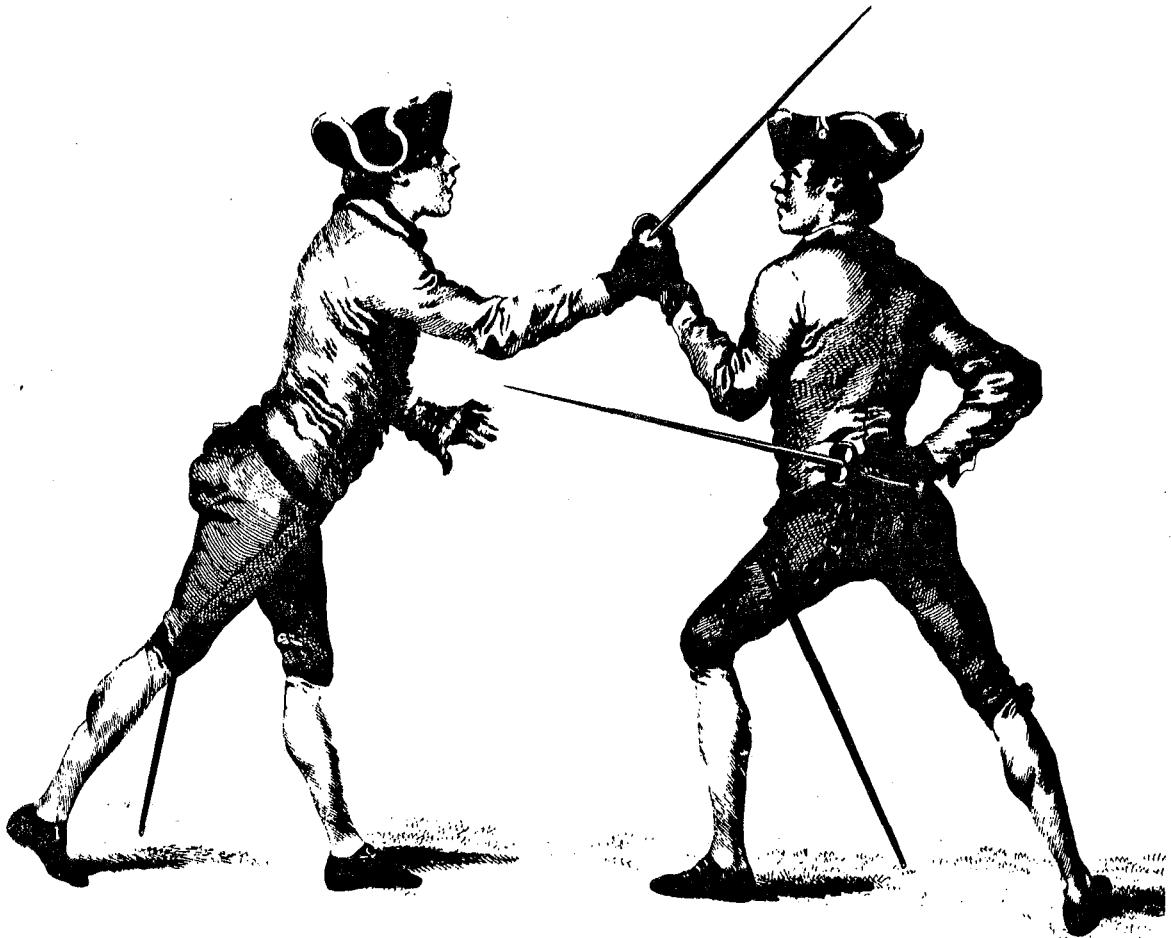
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the fight master

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THE FIGHT MASTER

The Magazine of the Society of American Fight Directors

No. 3

October 1978

Editor - Mike McGraw

Lay-out - David L. Boushey

Typed and Duplicated by Mike McGraw

Society of American Fight Directors

The second Society of Fight Directors in the world has been incorporated in Seattle, Washington. Its founder is David Boushey, Overseas Affiliate of the Society of British Fight Directors.

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A THANK YOU NOTE

As President of The Society of American Fight Directors, I would like to thank those members who took the time and effort to write the articles that are included in this edition of The Fight Master. It is through your efforts that the magazine is our best to date. As time passes, I hope we have more articles submitted by other members of the Society. I think that it is quite evident that the difference in quality of our magazine correlates directly to the awareness and diligence of those people who contribute to it. I feel we had a minimum number of articles for this edition but it was enough to make it a fine one. I ask all of the membership to become a part of the magazine and not just readers. It is very easy to read the magazine and absorb the many interesting articles which help each and every one of us in our chosen profession, but the challenge and pride that comes from producing your own piece of journalism can be a most rewarding experience.

The Society accepts almost all contributions as long as they can be related to the area of fight directing for the stage and cinema. If you feel your journalistic skills are not adequate, don't let that stop you! We are fortunate to have an excellent editor in Mr. Michael McGraw, who will undoubtedly correct a few dangling participles in this piece of writing. The important thing is that we all contribute to the benefit of one another. We are all in this profession together and if we cannot help each other with the vital information we as professionals and teachers possess then there is little hope that the Society will ever be the vital part of the total production we feel it is and should be. Again, thanks to all of you who contributed this time around and we look forward to articles from other members in the January edition.

D.L. Boushey - Pres. of S.A.F.D.

CERTIFICATION

The possibility of certifying students who have passed standard requirements set forth by The Society of American Fight Directors is a consideration for all members of the Society.

In Great Britain, full members of their society act as judges in various schools throughout the country. Their primary purpose is to either pass or fail students who are attempting to gain status as competent fight combatants. In the British Society, there are two classifications awarded to students; 1) Standard Certification; 2) Standard Certification with a Recommendation.

The second category is reserved only for those who have shown outstanding ability in the area of stage combat. It is very difficult to acquire the recommendation and the judge at hand often will ask a particular person or couple to do a piece of choreography that he himself has "set" before considering them for a recommendation. By maintaining rigid standards, only the very best students can hope for any special recognition by the Society of British Fight Directors.

It is my opinion that we as a society should set up a system similar to the British. The primary problem we have that the British don't have is lack of proximity. The vast majority of British Fight Directors live in London where the drama schools are located, while we are spread-out all over the United States. However, I feel this can be overcome. As we do have full members in every sector of the country, the possibility of bringing in a full member to judge various students is conceivable. Teachers would not be able to judge their own students just as full members who teach would not be able to judge their own students. The judges would have to be full members to insure the highest of standards as those students who gain certification will be representing the Society whether we like it or not. People in the theater community will be confronted by students possessing the Society's certificate and how we are perceived by individuals in the theater will go a long way in projecting our image as a viable part of the theater scene. This may be a bone of contention among some members of the society and perhaps rightfully so, but we must protect our image and, although there are some affiliates who could do very nicely in judging various applicants, we

must draw a line somewhere. Since the full members are proven masters, the officers in the society feel that this should be the way the guidelines are invoked for the time being.

The judges would need some kind of remuneration for travel expenses when going distances to judge a set of students. It has been suggested that the students pay a fee to cover the costs of the judge at their session. If this aspect of the program can be worked out, there should be no problem implementing certification.

One of the concerns that we as members have to consider is the possibility of students going out into the profession and setting themselves up as qualified Fight Masters. It will be stated on the certificate they receive that the bearer is a qualified stage fight combatant, but in no way does this qualify him to set or choreograph fight sequences. Nonetheless, the possibility is there that this could happen and young actors qualified to fight but not to choreograph will be representing the Society as Fight Masters. I would like to have "feed back" in this regard because I am sure there are those members who will not cherish the idea of losing potential fight work to someone who holds a certificate but in no way is qualified to "choreograph" fight sequences.

I personally feel that in the long run certification will work to our advantage as a society as it will bring focus to us as an organization of some merit. Those students who have earned their certificate will be ambassadors for the society. What we must do as a society is see that those individuals are worthy of an association with our good name. As I have stated in the past, one of the primary reasons for the formation of the society was to promote the Fight Director and make him an integral part of the theater. To establish fight directing as a necessity and not a luxury and anything that will help achieve that goal is of concern to me. I keep stating that we deserve credit for our efforts in this small corner of the theater and I mean it with a conviction that is unrelentless.

We already have a number of good members who are teachers in various schools throughout the country. Those of you who instruct in the areas of armed and unarmed combat should have your efforts recognized through your students. There are many colleges and universities who could sponsor a judge to come into their schools and pass judgement upon the capabilities of students who have been prop-

erly trained in combat.

I would very much like to hear from more teachers in regard to this proposal of certification. I have already heard from some but, as the teachers of stage fighting are what is going to make this program work, I would welcome any comments, good or bad. Let me hear from you! Whether this program is to be enacted will have to depend upon the members of the society who do teach and who will have the ultimate obligation to see that their students are worthy of the recognition this society would be bestowing upon them.

D.L. Boushey

The Society of American Fight Directors is pleased to announce that it is embarking on a series of "real life" duels that have taken place throughout the centuries. We shall start at the instance when duelling was enacted as a part of the judicial system to determine who was innocent and who was guilty. Of course, the system wasn't foolproof as you will read in upcoming articles. The reader can often get real insight into what constituted a duel and thus apply it to the stage or cinema if the occasion calls for it. There was a certain amount of protocol in duelling that changed throughout the centuries. If you are doing Hamlet then you realize the importance of protocol and how much it can lend to a production.

The first article on duelling is going to deal with its origin. What many historians call;

TRIAL BY COMBAT

A REBUTTAL TO A REBUTTAL!

I read Joe Martinez' article "To Slap or Not To Slap - That Isn't Always The Question" in the July, 1978 edition of THE FIGHT MASTER. I appreciate his concerns. I appreciate his "due respect and deference". I do not agree with his assertions or conclusions. He believes that my suggestions on contact-slapping are "misinformation" and that they are "very dangerous and completely in error from the standpoint of safety". We are obviously in disagreement on that.

I do not like slaps either. I try to avoid them. "Non-contact" methods can be used when a slap is completely masked. When a moment occurs that only partially masks a slap, or one that is completely open to view, then I feel that a contact-slap is more aesthetically effective than a non-contact slap. I also agree that a contact face-slap may be more aesthetically effective than a contact neck-slap. The problem is that, in order for it to be more effective, it needs to be delivered with a velocity that brings with it a high probability of pain, and a significant risk of injury.

A slap delivered to the cheek with the accuracy of placement and the appropriate minimal force (consonant with aesthetic effectiveness) that he describes will still hurt! There are just too many nerve endings on the cheek surface. The same slap, delivered with the same considerations of accuracy and force to the muscular sheathing of the neck ... not the throat ... is easier for the performer to absorb without loss of focus or concentration. Over the long run, I have come to the subjective judgement that a slap on the neck that does not bring with it pain and apprehension engenders a more aesthetically consistent, and therefore a more aesthetically effective, scene than a slap on the face.

We have not yet taken into account the novice (or "professional") actor who "gets carried away with his role", and in a moment of either enthusiasm or carelessness does not fully meet our mutual stipulations of appropriate force and accuracy. This is the moment both of us dread. We are both committed to preserving the well-being of our performers. This is where aesthetics take a back seat to safety. We have very different perceptions of the best way to achieve a margin of safety.

On the matter of safety, please differentiate between the vulnerable tissues of the throat and the muscular structure of the neck. The excellent drawings from Gray's Anatomy which illustrated Martinez' article clearly show the shock-absorbing muscular sheathing which receives the blow under any reasonably accurate execution of my technique. The cupped palm spares the lesser muscular structure as one moves around the side of the neck, and the throat is to be avoided at all times. Neither the trachea nor the cervical vertebrae are in the attack area. I tested this method with almost 50 actors, striking me and each other, while working it out. I have had no reason to change my mind about that in the 20 years I have been using and teaching that technique.

The Martial Arts attacks cited to the throat and neck area are delivered with a specifically conditioned hand ... with the edge of the hand ... and with a wholly different velocity and angle of attack. I do not think the comparison holds.

I appreciate his concern. I believe that there is an element of risk in any form of violent contact. We have two very different perceptions of the degree of risk in the neck-slap vs. the cheek-slap. The weak point in both his method and mine is the reliance on accuracy of placement. Either will work safely if done correctly. He believes there is greater risk of injury my way. I believe there is greater risk of injury his way. I am unaware of injuries arising out of misplacement of neck-slaps, although I cannot guarantee that there have been none or that none will occur. I am aware, as an outside observer, of three fractured cheek bones, and one jaw bone torn from its left hinge, as people endeavored to correctly execute the cheek-slap. The development of my technique arose directly from my experience with some of those injuries. I believe there is a greater degree of leeway ... of margin for error ... without damaging results, in the neck-placement. Obviously, this is a matter of professional judgement and opinion. We happen to disagree.

Albert M. Katz

SHOTGUN BLANKS

As a new (Associate) member of the Society, I feel a bit strange at immediately taking issue with a statement made in The Fight Master's latest issue. Nonetheless, experience demands I take issue with one statement made by Ron Martell in his otherwise excellent article on firearms. In the discussion on long guns, Mr. Martell states "firearms companies do not produce shotgun blanks, so the problem of repacking your own arises...". Such is not the case. Not only are blank shells produced, but the Fight Director in most states may have a distinct choice between two types.

The first of these is known as the regatta shell. Used in the miniature cannon often used as a starting gun for sailing events, these are available in both 12 and 16 guage. The shell uses a single wad for compression which tends to travel as a unit, reducing the hazard of spread but carrying a distance of eight to ten feet with considerable force. Theatrically, this unit can be very effective, since it is designed with a black powder charge which provides a substantial visual effect. A muzzle flash, plus a volume of dense smoke, is produced from even a single-barrel discharge. The only real drawback is the fouling of the weapon from the black powder which mandates rigorous cleaning and maintenance of the weapon after each use.

The second unit is more widely available than the regatta shell, which may take some searching to find..(I mourn for Abercrombie and Fitch). Called a "popper" load, the shell is manufact-

ured for use in field-dog trials, where the animal must demonstrate its ability to maintain a hunting posture while a weapon is discharged at close range. Popper loads use modern smokeless powder and yield a sound slightly louder than a normal shell of the same guage. These shells are packed with a plastic compound which disintegrates into particles resembling fine sand. This material dissipates within about four feet. There is no danger of injury from the relatively solid wad of the regatta shell, but obvious potential hazard to the eyes of the actor.

Within the past two years I have had occasion to work on the only two recent scripts which, to my knowledge, call specifically for the use of a shotgun. One is the comedy Knock, Knock, which uses the blast to set up a comic entrance; the other being Lanford Wilson's The Rimers of Eldridge, wherein the blast is used for a cathartic, tragic effect. Should any other members of the Society find themselves involved in a production of either work, I hope that the above information might be useful to them in achieving a viable effect.

End of sermon! I did enjoy the issue, and look forward to future editions.

W.S. MacConnell

GUIDELINE FOR A WORKSHOP

by D. L. Boushey

It has been suggested by a number of the membership that the Society include in one of their editions a procedure for carrying out a workshop in armed and unarmed combat. The following information might be useful to those of the membership who are interested in conducting a workshop but do not have a guideline set forth.

First, I prefer to give the students an introduction to modern fencing. This is not in any way meant to act as a style of swordplay to be applied to any century. Modern fencing does not apply to, let's say, 16th century rapier and dagger. But what modern fencing does offer is a means by which you as an instructor can instill in your students a certain amount of posturing which can apply to any form of weaponry. Modern fencing lends itself as a tool in helping students realize what good posture is and how effective they can look on stage, especially if they are playing a character who has to be very strong (Tybalt, Cyrano, etc.). Also, it acquaints the students with the various parries. For all practical purposes, the standard parries have not changed in 300 years. A point also to be considered is putting the student in a position where he or she has a weapon in their hand and a person across from them has one. This is the way it is going to be on stage. I personally do not believe in putting masks on my students. I rely on safety factors!

Rather than being concerned about not being hit because one is in hitting proximity, I stress being out of 'fencing measure' so the student cannot be hit. This means being about 6 inches from your partner on a three-quarter lunge. Sooner or later those masks have to come off and one has to come to grips with the fact that there is a sword on the other end of yours. And now there are safety factors to consider. There are a multitude which are probably a part of your own procedure. I have yet to have a student seriously hurt in a training workshop. I might add that my fights are anything but nice, cautious fights. They look very real because, if they are

going to be accepted by an audience, they have to look like someone is trying to do injury to another. Here again, what I rely on is safety and the various methods by which one can insure that the actors involved will live to fight another day.

After giving the students an introduction to fencing and the various parries involved, I start at the beginning by demonstrating broadsword technique. Obviously, broadsword has very little to do with modern fencing, so a style that is more ponderous and closer to the ground is adapted. It is good when you as an instructor have a supply of broadswords to use in your instruction. Students have a hard time when the foils or epees are abandoned and the heavy broadsword is given to them. They tend to think that broadswords really aren't too bad if they have been learning the technique with foils, but what a rude surprise when the day comes that 6 lb. broadswords are thrust into their hands. As well as having the students become aware of the size of medieval weapons and their application, one must also be careful to abandon the modern advance lunge-style of movement. That style of movement wasn't around during the medieval period. What was around was simply advancing one foot in front of the other or visa versa, while slightly rotating your hips, thus allowing for a longer step. Also, retaining a posture close to the ground, is standard procedure for any of the Martial Arts.

After the students have been introduced to the broadsword, the quarter-staff should be employed. This is the oldest of all weapons and very useful, especially in "low budget" shows.

Next, the student can be introduced to the rapier and dagger. I personally find this to be the most exciting of all the various forms of weaponry, primarily because you are fighting with a weapon in each hand and the possibilities are almost endless as to what can be done. Here again, the advance lunge was yet to be adapted and the proper way to move was with one foot in front of the other (almost like a regular walk but more open, low to the ground, and with rotation). I find it a bit strange to see some of the old movies with the participants using the advance lunge (especially in the medieval period). I assume this is because the choreographers were fencing masters versed in modern fencing/sabre technique. There is nothing wrong, in my opinion, to "slip-in" some modern

fencing technique in the classical pieces, however; when the duel begins to take the form of a modern fencing match, then I think you are destroying the authenticity of the duel and the period that is being portrayed. Theatrical license must be taken on occasion and I am in total agreement with it - after all, you are presenting a theatrical event with all the trimmings that go along with the theater. In other words, if I see two fighters in the Musketeer period fight in straight lines back and forth as though they were on a fencing strip, then I question the choreography because, as we know, the combatants in those days used a lot of circling with their opponent before attacking.

After the rapier and dagger comes the single rapier, which should be stressed. This moves us right into the small sword or "court sword" era where fencing, as we know it today, started to blossom. The finger technique and the handling of the weapon has to be much more precise for this period. Anyone who has seen the great swashbuckling film Scaramouche knows what great fight choreography can look like on film and, with some exception, how authentic it can look. As Fight Directors you would find that the style in the small sword era (1700's), is about as close as you are going to come to modern fencing unless you are doing a modern piece. Even though the small sword was a thrusting weapon, the cut can be very effectively employed, especially if you use an abbreviated cut. As mentioned in the last edition of the Fight Master, it is very difficult to employ only thrusts on stage because it will tend to get a bit boring. A few well-placed cuts is part of that theatrical license I was talking about.

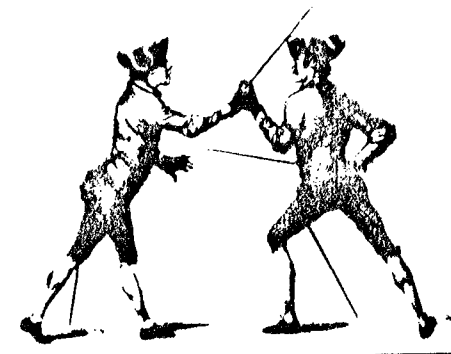
With the bulk of the weaponry out of the way, I would now go into "unarmed" combat. First, I start with slapping as that is something all of your students will have to do at some time or another. I show the real slap WHICH DOES EXIST! (By the way, I must say that I am in agreement with the slap on the fleshy part of the cheek as opposed to the neck-slap). Anyway, after the real slap I show a variety of fake slaps, depending on what type of situation your actor is in and what angle they are delivered. In this article I am not intending to go into the various slaps, punches, kicks, etc. because there are people who have written books on these aspects of stage fighting and I hardly have the time or

space to go into all the techniques in this article. (Besides, we have had two good articles and a rebuttal already). Next, I would go into punching with the various blows available (including the stomach punch). I would include the rabbit punch and the judo chop in that category. I might next tackle the various kicks to the stomach, face, leg, back, and last but not least, the groin. Included in this category would be the knee to the face and stomach. With the kicks out of the way I would demonstrate hair pulling, biting, scratching, and perhaps slamming one's face into a wall! Now you could move into throws such as the hip roll, the body slam, and the back breaker. Also included in this area should be how to lift someone properly from the floor. Don't forget to show how to faint and fall properly. This would include the forward roll which can be adapted to many situations in a fight without weapons, or, for that matter, with weapons.

The one area I neglected to mention was the use of the dagger only. It can be used very effectively as a fighting weapon. How to make a stab look real is an art of its own.

Do note that I have deliberately not gone into the various techniques as I mentioned before. It would be impossible in an article of this size. What I hope I have done here is to give you some ideas as to what might be pursued in a fight workshop. I don't pretend to have covered everything but I do feel those areas I have covered would lend themselves rather nicely to a pretty thorough stage fight workshop.

D.L. Boushey



* HISTORY OF THE SWORD AND OF SWORDPLAY

by Alexander Diltz

The earliest swords of which authentic records exist were those of the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Gauls, and the Greeks. These weapons were double-edged, straight or leaf-shaped. They were made of bronze. Iron or steel swords did not appear until later. The Athenians are credited as the first to establish rules to govern combat with the sword.

The Roman sword was made of steel. It was short (about 20 to 24 inches long), straight, and double-edged with its point cut at an obtuse angle. The Roman foot soldier became extraordinarily skillful with this weapon and worked out set rules for its use, which emphasized a short stabbing action plus some use of the edge. In the field, the sword was supported by a full-length shield around which the soldier stabbed and chopped. In single combat, the weapon was employed in attack and defence.

The Barbarians whom the Romans fought - Franks, Gauls, Huns - wielded straight two-edged iron swords about three feet long, with a tapered point. This point was rarely used, however, since their method of fence was to attack by heavy blows with the edge.

It is interesting to note that after the Fall of the Roman Empire, the use of the point disappeared from the art of sword-play and was not revived until the age of the rapier - the mid-seventeenth century. Also, the philosophy of the barbarian, that the best defense is an attack, continued to be the dominant idea in combat until the eighteenth century.

During the Middle Ages the sword or broadsword was lengthened, but still retained its general "Barbarian" shape. Cross-pieces (Quillons) were added to protect the hand and, later, rings below the cross-hilts to protect the fingers. Most swords of this period were designed for combat on horseback in battle or in the jousting lists. Use of these weapons depended upon attack with the edge or the dealing of a heavy chopping blow.

At this time (15th century) swords of foot soldiers reached the incredible length of six feet. Because of their length, they could be used to spear opponents with the point. This sword, along with the pike or billhook, was wielded with two hands in long sweeping motions. These were effective against broadsword and shield in a close-packed melee.

The only weapons in which the point was the main feature were the narrow-bladed "estoc" and the long dagger. These stabbing instruments could be effective only if the knight was breast to breast with his opponent. Although these two point weapons were not vital to the combat of their time, the estoc was to reappear in a more developed form. It is interesting to note that while cutting weapons of later ages - such as the sabre, cutlass, claymore, talwar, and scimitar - are direct descendants of these early broadswords, the little used "estoc" was the progenitor of the rapier and court-sword.

Swords of the Middle Ages were principally designed for cutting and pounding an opponent. Their was little scienc in their use, except to develop a strong arm, since the entire philosophy of swordplay was attack, never defense. The function of defense was left to body armor and shield.

Gunpowder spelled the end of Chivalry and its dependence upon shield and body armor. For the first time, the average soldier or freeman could be the equal to a Knight on horseback. The earliest teachers of swordplay to the rising middle class were the Jugglers and Sword Dancers who travelled with fairs from town to town. Constant practice in dancing and mock combats led these men to develop their techniques, and among them there came into existence the fighting guilds or swordmasters. The oldest recorded group was the Marxbruders of Germany (1350) with their golden lion emblem. Their basic weapon was sword and shield or buckler, though in later years they taught rapier and dagger as well.

In 1410, an Italian, Fiore Dei Lideri Da Premariaco, wrote a treatise entitled "Il Fior Di Battaglia". As far as is known this was the first attempt at describing swordplay in instructive

manuscript form. Later, 1443, a German, Hans Talhoffer, wrote "Fecht-Buch", describing the Marxbruder school of fence with sword and shield.

During the 16th century the sword became much lighter and a cup-shaped guard was added to the quillons. The weapon became a rapier, and the point rather than the edge was used to make an attack. Many historians believe that the rapier was first developed in Italy, and at least the first description of the weapon comes from this part of the world. The early rapier was a heavy, long weapon and few indeed were the feints that could be made with it compared with the court-sword of later centuries. Although used principally for thrusting, it had a cutting edge with which a blow could be struck. The other hand was provided with a variety of weapons to protect the "undefended" side of the body. Such devices as the dagger, cloak, buckler or target, another rapier, and even an armored glove were also used for this purpose. As the science of fence became better understood, however, these secondary protections were discarded and the rapier became a weapon of both offense and defense. A later version of this weapon called the transition rapier was gradually shortened and lightened, but it still retained its cutting and thrusting design. Though all weapons named above were used in combat, with amazing dexterity born of ceaseless practice - it must be remembered that, compared with modern competitive fencing, the "pace" of combat in those years was slow. Today, fencing bouts last a comparatively short time. It was not uncommon then for a duel to be going strong for fifteen or twenty minutes.

Who first rediscovered that the ancient Romans were right - that the point of a sword is more deadly than the edge and that a thrust can be delivered quicker than a cut? In any event, it was an Italian, Camillo Agrippa di Milano who, in 1553, first put in print the science of fence emphasizing the point and devised the first four simple parries of "prima", "seconde", "terza", and "Quarta" - names still used today.

In 1570 another Italian, Giacomo di Grasse da Modena, published a treatise that spoke for the first time of lines of defense

and attack and generally propounded a simpler theory of fence than Morozzo. In 1573, a Frenchman, Henri St. Didier, was the first to describe specific thrusts in his treatise on sword-play.

The lunge, one of the first movements taught today, had not been invented and combatants circled round each other when fighting - and advanced and retreated by means of passes (one foot put forward or back). In 1575, an Italian writer, Angelo Viggiani, while hinting that a lunge is preferable to a pass, still followed the older theories of Morozzo in his basic sword-play. He did, however, champion the point over the edge and insisted that the right foot should lead on all guards. In 1608, another Italian, Nicoletto Giganti, had the distinction of being the first to explain clearly the advantage of the lunge in extending the reach in all attacks.

Of all the works on rapier play, none ever had such a share in fixing the principles of the science of rapier-dagger fence than Ridolfo Capo Ferro da Cagli. In his book published Siena in 1610, he clearly defined the necessary positions of the body and weapons in delivering attacks and in parrying thrusts. His rapier and dagger fencing was concise and practical, almost eliminating the use of the edge. For example, in the second of his thirteen basic principles, he states: "A good swordsman, when playing, must never fail, on parrying, to retort with a thrust, nor must he go forward to strike without being sure of parrying the return, ...". In his eleventh principle, "If thou shouldst have to pass in a straight line, one foot must drive the other, whether forward or backward". This was an almost clear description of modern fencing's advance and retreat. In all it can be said that he took the most practical theories of swordplay from his predecessors and refined the art to a level hitherto unknown.

Every fencing master and/or seasoned duellist had his botta secreta, which he guarded very jealously. For a time, so simple an action as the lunge was such a botta. Usually a botta was a series of defined movements "guaranteed" to end with the user's

blade through his opponent - at least that is what the user paid a considerable sum to learn.

The time of the rapier (1500-1670) was the most personally quarrelsome age of history. Swords rested very lightly in their scabbards and were drawn upon the slightest provocation. During the eighteen year reign of Louis XIII, seven thousand of the gentry perished in private duels. No honor was observed, no courtly rules were imposed in duels of the period, and hidden body armor, concealed throwing knives and armored gloves were not only common but often outlined in the treatises by fencing masters of the period. A passing stranger could be called upon to act as witness to a duel. If the action heated up (as it usually did), he would find himself in a general melee with the other witnesses. In this belligerent atmosphere a man wore his sword at all times. Thus the necessary convenience of his weapon to the wearer had much to do with bringing about a gradual lightening and shortening of the rapier.

During the period 1670-1680, a Swedish noble, Count Koeningsmarken invented a new sword called the colichemarde. It supplanted the rapier to a great extent. The weapon had a small oval hilt and its marked peculiarity was a triangular blade that was wide for about half its length and narrow for the remainder. Designers still considered cuts as being important and this triangular shape gave to a thin blade the stiffness to eliminate whippiness.

About 1760 the colichemarde gave way in France to the court-sword or small sword. The French are credited with being the first to discard practically all cutting from their system of fence. The court-sword was ideal since it was a very light weapon, about the same as a modern foil, with short quillons, small circular guard, and a narrow straight blade. It was to reign as a gentleman's principal weapon for nearly fifty years, until about 1800, when civilians ceased to wear swords as part of their dress.

In some countries the evolution of the "Point" vs. "Edge" was much slower than elsewhere. In England, in fact, rapier

fence, or "foyning" as it was known, did not take hold until about 1580 when Vincentio Saviolo introduced the art to the Court of Queen Elizabeth. His book in 1595 was the first text on the sword published in English. Englishmen were reluctant to abandon their beloved broadswords for a lighter "pricking" weapon. The Scots never made the conversion and clung to their basket-hilted broadsword until late in the 18th century. The Germans and Hungarians continued with their love of the broadsword, but eventually they evolved the lighter sabre or Schlager. This is not to say that the rapier play was unknown in these countries but those of the gentry who adopted this "new" style of fence were in the minority.

The period of the court-sword, although less quarrelsome than that of the rapier, was far from peaceful. It also brought into prominence in the 18th and 19th century the four men who were probably the finest swordsmen the world has ever seen - the three Frenchmen, Chevalier de St. George, Chevalier D Hon, and Jean Louis; also an Englishman, Henry Angelo. But these all lived in a period when, owing to the increased use of pistols, there was more fencing with the foil, for sport, than actual duelling. Fencers of today - might be counted as faster, but no contemporary champion has lived in an age when skill with a sword might stand between life and death. In one demonstration, Jean Louis in Madrid in 1813, before the assembled army, killed or wounded thirteen Italian fencing masters. It is said he accomplished this feat by using a maneuver that is now common in all schools - the riposte. This was not then used by the Italians.

The riposte was first described in 1653 by the pioneer of the court-sword, Charles Besnard "Le Maistre D Arme Liberal" who actually was still teaching the transitional rapier.

By 1800, swordplay was confined to the fencing salle or to occasional duels. The foil, as we know it, was developed about the middle of the seventeen hundreds as a practice weapon for small sword.

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*SAVE THE SPECIALIST

by A.D. Grupe

We as a society have long understood why most repertory companies, apart from the largest such as Coventry, Nottingham and Bristol, have not customarily employed a Fight Director. Quite simply, they could not afford to.

Recently, and with a frequency that should give rise to concern, it is noticeable that even in London, a number of our major companies also are using members of their ensemble with no known experience of arranging combats. At a time when managements are struggling for existence due to the current financial climate, it is possible to see that a fully trained person to direct fights or choreograph dances might be a luxury when an actor or actress already on the payroll has the inclination to undertake the work. However, young actors, who may well have proved to be excellent students in their training at drama school, cannot, however talented, be as knowledgeable or experienced as the full time exponent of the fight game. There is no monopoly on creation and inventiveness, but ultimately, it is the safety of those performing which must balance the scales in favor of a professional arranger.

Of course, an accident can occur in any fight, irrespective of who has directed it, and for a myriad of unexpected reasons, but the experienced eye knows what to be watching out for during rehearsals and eliminate in advance the possible causes of accidents. This is something the inexperienced cannot do, however talented. It is also necessary to consider that in most cases our members are turning out a great many routines in the course of a year as well as coaxing students through their training without hazard or injury. The young actor on the other hand may undertake a fight or two for the fun of it and that will be that, his total contribution complete, neither wishing to develop any further, or desiring to continue with the work. After all, it is not his main preoccupation, but merely a sideline and, having taken a job or two away from the professional, he probably will not be further involved in the work. Were these isolated cases,

it would be of no importance. But when multiplied by the number of young actors involved, the matter is very much more serious. Without proper investigation it is impossible to know how many jobs are lost in this way, but it could well be a great many.

Next, a plea for survival. Freelance choreographers, Fight Directors, and even designers are equally battered by the prevailing economic crisis in the arts, and those of us brought in from the outside to work on a production need protection as much as the actor in a company engaged for a season, perhaps more so, for our employment with a company can never be for very long. If our work is for shorter periods, either fees have to be considerably higher than at present or more jobs must be available. When we cannot rely on even our major theatrical managements budgeting for the fights, then the future for our members and this society is indeed bleak. When companies such as The New Shakespeare and The Young Vic. use inexperienced and undeveloped talent on the grounds of economy, a further question arises. Is it right to expect any salaried actor to undertake the extra work entailed in arranging a fight without some kind of payment, however token? If the answer is "No", then it might be reasonably argued that the sum involved could be spent to better effect on the professional. In either case, it is now totally unacceptable that fights or, for that matter, dances should be set without payment for "experience". New talent is, of course, to be encouraged and there must always be ways to learn and develop, but should not this one day be under the auspices of the Society, rather than at present in such an ad hoc manner with the student Errol Flynn being nurtured upon unsuspecting artists?

The Society's work in drama schools, instructing in techniques of performance and safety, is definitely encouraging. Young actors are being turned out more suitably trained in combat than ever before, and this training provides a basis upon which to build the art of direction. It is, therefore, understandable that many will happily jump at the first opportunity to arrange, for they will have a love and enjoyment in stage fighting, which is a compliment to our teaching members. However, although the inexperienced actor has a right to his place

in a company based upon ability, the same principle cannot be applied to the young untested Fight Director, for he has in his hands the safety of third parties.

So what is the answer? In the same way as many repertory companies unable to afford the more seasoned pro. will employ a company of young talent, perhaps they could also budget annually for a novice fight arranger or choreographer. This could either be a member of the company who has the requisite training or someone seeking wider experience who is brought in specially to do the job. The Society could keep a list of suitable people. This would be less expensive for a rep. than using a Full Member of the Society, and provide a training ground for new talent, besides ensuring a higher standard both in performance and in safety. The national companies and commercial managements must, of course, as in the main they do, use an experienced arranger, otherwise, when the economic belt-tightening is over, there will be no one of experience left.

Finally, a plea to all managements not to forget the freelance specialist, whether choreographer, Fight Director, or whatever else he may be. He may not be as essential to the production as the actors and stage management, but nonetheless makes a valuable contribution to the production.

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--REVIEW--

HAMLET AT THE GUTHRIE

In all of Shakespeare, few fights offer the choreographer as many challenges and opportunities as the climactic duel in HAMLET. The constantly changing mood and rhythm of the fight, the crowd, the complexity of the characters involved, the effect on the characters of information that they (and the audience) may have that other characters don't; all these and many other elements combine to produce a Fight Director's dream (or nightmare!). The choices and problems are endless.

Unfortunately, in the current production at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis, too few choices have been made and too many problems ignored. The result is a very unsatisfactory fight. And the dissatisfaction grows as one checks the program and finds that this uninspired piece of swordplay was choreographed by no less a master than Patrick Crean himself.

Crean seems to have completely ignored the obvious; that no two HAMLETs can or should be the same. This time around he's choreographed a HAMLET, all right, but not the Guthrie's! This is a very unspecific, inorganic duel, a Hamlet-For-Any-Occasion or, perhaps, Hamlet Fight Sequence #603. It seemed to stop the action of the play rather than advance it.

Does knowing his point is envenomed unnerve Laertes? Or does it make him coolly confident? Whatever the choice, the swordplay must reflect it. Is Hamlet too sure of his swordsmanship? Or has he really been in constant practice? Again, either way, a choice needs to be made. But Crean seems merely to have blocked out some

"moves" and left it at that. To paraphrase Agate's famous review of Olivier, "Mr. Crean doesn't interpret HAMLET badly - he doesn't interpret it at all". The choreography looked like exactly that. Attacks had no intent behind them, no organic purpose motivating them. One could almost see the actors counting and saying, "Let's see....I aim for his chest, now he blocks me, now I block him, and then I fall down." Now the actors may be much at fault here, too, but it's hard to make a fight your own when it's been choreographed for a Hamlet, not your Hamlet.

The rhythm, the mood, the intensity of the fight were one-level and, at times, even nonexistent. The two combatants were fighting in precisely the same manner at the end of the fight as in the beginning. The "bout" never turned into a life-or-death affair.

The blame can't be set entirely on Crean. The Guthrie gave him a fast, lithe Hamlet, but also a small space to work in, a few not-terribly-enthused court members and, most unfortunately of all, a very unathletic Laertes. In past Guthrie productions, this performer has proved himself an excellent and graceful actor and one would have thought he'd have made a fine Laertes, but he looks very unhappy doing the role. He's probably all too aware of his shortcomings as a swordsman and turns in a very uncomfortable performance.

Other allowances must also be made. The performance reviewed here was the actors' fourth in three days and, no doubt, they were exhausted. Even in the show's best performances (Randall Duc Kim's

honest and angry Hamlet, Patricia Fraser's strong Gertrude, Peter MacNicol's nicely smarmy Osrice), one suspected there was less life than usual. Still, the net result was like the swordplay - disappointing. The Guthrie is one of the nation's top regional theaters and capable of better work than this.

The same is true of Patrick Crean. One recalls his wonderfully breath-taking CYRANO at the Guthrie years ago and wonders what went wrong. Perhaps he saw what he had to work with and gave up. Perhaps he didn't have enough time or, perhaps, he was just tired. But one doesn't really need to make excuses for the Grand Old Man of the fencing game. Everyone's thrust is passe' at times and, no doubt, next time he'll be back in form and produce a "very palpable hit".

Peter Moore



OTHER EXPLOSIVE DEVICES

FOR STAGE AND SCREEN

by Ron Martell, S.A.F.D.

CONTINUED FROM JULY ISSUE

The fantastic development of motion picture stunt technology is providing new and remarkable possibilities for the stage fight profession. It is an almost certainty that these innovations will soon provide safe, inexpensive effects devices available for theatrical use, but at this stage, few can be cited that meet these criteria.

Such a device as the safety vest with an explosive charge could well prove useful, especially as prototypes have been designed which can be set off either by the actor via a battery spark, or offstage by radio. But its reliability is questionable. I, myself, have yet to see one work effectively, safely, repeatedly. If anyone has, please write in. I'm sure we'd all be interested.

There is some progress along similar lines with the development of a theatrical blank which is tipped with a gelatin blood capsule. The bullet, which, when fired from a rifle at a target, explodes, releasing the stage blood as the capsule shatters. It is very effective, but requires an off-stage marksman and body padding for the target. I question the use of body contact from a long distance and the attendant safety problems. If a smaller, pistol charge blood bullet could be developed, I would imagine that it might be of some use to the stage fight community in the future.

Allow me, in closing, to offer some suggestions in approaching work with firearms.

The foremost task the Fight Director has before him in this particular speciality is to understand and respect the firearm as a lethal weapon, far more dangerous than any other stage weapon. A course in rifle and pistol safety and marksmanship is essential to the professional. A good knowledge of the mechanics and ballistics involved is also required, since the Fight Director will have to supervise matters of actor training, maintenance of weapons, and make various production decisions involving firearms.

On a very basic level, I make it a point never to aim a weapon at anyone at any time, as I always assume the gun is loaded. When firing onstage, never fire directly at your partner. Stage the scene so that the throw would, if it were far enough, pass to one side. Make sure the backstage or offstage wing areas involved are clear of people.

The misuse of factory-packed blank ammunition can cause powder burns, head and eye injuries and, on at least one occasion I know of, death. These common blanks are packed in the same factories as live ammunition and there is the remote possibility that a single sliver of metal could find its way into a blank charge. This was the case when an actor was shot to death on stage during a community theater production in Palo Alto, California a few years back. I always assume that my factory blanks contain that sliver, that one in a billion chance,

The remedy for this nasty possibility is to load up your own blanks, which I recommend if you are qualified and equipped to do so. This method also allows you to regulate the charge and even the throw to some extent. If you do resort to factory blanks, as we all must at one time or another, be sure to buy from a reputable firearms company - Remington, Winchester, etc.

If presented the choice, always opt for the single action pistol over the double action pistol. The double action can be fired by squeezing the trigger. The single action requires an actual cocking of the hammer before the trigger can be pulled. This second activity prevents any unconscious firing by an actor in the heat of the play and greatly reduces the possibility of accidental discharge if the weapon is dropped or if the hammer or trigger catches on something while the gun is loaded.

I suppose that we will never escape all the problems that theatrical firearms present. Complicated weapons present complicated problems. Shakespeare's company found that out in a big way when the Globe caught fire from a cannon discharge during Henry VIII and we have had firearms troubles ever since. Still, it is our job to deal with such matters and the more we work at our craft and the more we can assist one another along the way, the safer and better will be the actor's lot, even through "a hail of bullets".

. . . by Samuel Bruce Campbell

For the inexperienced fight choreographer the problem of "authenticity" of combat action can only be truly solved by more experience and continuous research. For such research and study by the student of personal combat, the book list appearing on page 29 of the 2nd issue of the Fight Master is highly recommended as a major source of information. Especially recommended are; The History and Art of Personal Combat by Arthur Wise, and Schools and Masters of Fence by Egerton Castle.

However, the present author's own research and experience lead him to suggest another, though preliminary, method for the budding fight master to control and inhibit any tendency to employ combat anachronisms in his early attempts at choreography. This is the study of War Games.

To some of us, the mention of war-gaming evokes images of members of the Pentagon, deep in an underground bunker, hovering over a globe, deciding where to throw their atomic eggs-- and the probable reaction by the enemy to these first-strike actions. Others will have an equally valid picture of retired army generals, from their arm chairs, refighting the historical

campaigns of the recent or distant past, using toy soldiers and table top battle fields.

To the war-gaming aficionado, however, there is a third alternative. These are board games, or paper and pencil games that have been designed to simulate "swordplay on a man-to-man scale", gladiatorial combat among the various types of gladiators of the Roman Arena, and in one case--En Garde! by Game Designers' Workshop--an entire semi/historical society "representing many of the situations of an Errol Flynn movie set in the Seventeenth or Eighteenth Centuries."

Theoretically, each of these games of tactics and strategy have been designed with all of the parameters of the game-dueling situation considered and outlined. However, a game designed by someone with a faulty knowledge of the dueling situation will itself prove faulty. And here I come to my recommendation and suggestion for a useful and valid activity for the Society as a whole.

Is it not possible for The Society of Fight Directors, calling upon the expertise and knowledge of its more experienced members, and the writing and corresponding energies of other interested members, to form a coalition with experienced game designers of either Game Designers' Workshop or Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc., and to outline more perfectly all of the parameters of a number of period dueling situations and design a series of

personal combat strategy games. The supposition here is that the playing and analysis of these games would greatly aid students (and interested laymen) in achieving an "authentic" concept of the dueling situation in various time periods and in various cultures and societies. Indeed, in the classroom, the results of a particularly interesting game could be choreographed as an illustration to the class.

References

Most of the presently existing board games can be obtained from The Compleat Strategist, 11 East 33rd St., N.Y.C. 10016.

En Garde! Being in the Main a Game of the Life and Times of a Gentleman Adventurer and his Several Companions (copyright, 1975, Game Designers' Workshop).

Rapier and Dagger, Swordplay on a Man-to-Man Scale; Rules for Miniatures or Paper and Pencil (copyright, 1978, Wilf K. Backhaus. Manufactured by Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc., P.O. Box 182, Roslyn, N.Y. 11576).

Gladiator, (Manufactured by Fantasy Games Unlimited, Inc.)

Follow-up correspondence to this article is invited by: Samuel Bruce Campbell, 65 East 96th St.(10B), N.Y.C. 10028

'POINTS' OF INTEREST

We have three new members to the Society since the membership recently received their up-dated membership fact sheets! The new members are listed in alphabetical order:

Mr. Jim Hancock (Affiliate)
Theater Dept.
Southern Methodist Univ.
Dallas, Texas
75275

Mr. Hollis W. Huston (Affiliate)
Theater Dept.
Univ. of Delaware
Newark, Del.
19711

Ms. Jennifer Martin (Affiliate)
Theater Dept.
Univ. Theater
Iowa City, Iowa
52242

If you have a change of address, please notify the Society so we can still forward correspondence to you. We prefer home addresses as opposed to school addresses because your mail may be delayed if you are on vacation and our mail may require an immediate response.

If you are ever in a position where you cannot accept a fight job or workshop situation because of prior commitments, pass the job on to one of your fellow colleagues. Everyone has a membership fact sheet which includes addresses. If you can't take the job, don't let it go at that. Recommend a colleague. The Society believes very strongly in "keeping it in the family". Here again, this is part of the reason why The Society of American Fight Directors was formed.

Paddy Crean is putting the final touches on his soon to be released book "MAY I HAVE THE PLEASURE OF THIS WALTZ, YOUR HIGHNESS?" which is, according to Paddy, a biography and a tribute to the female sex without whom, Paddy feels, he would be nothing. The title is the first line he ever spoke in a movie, PYGMALION, starring Leslie Howard and Wendy Hiller. The book covers Paddy's illustrious army career and his breaking into show business through to his present distinction as the Grand Patriarch of all fight masters now living. Apparently a friend has told him that the book has the makings of a best seller! The friend is a literary critic!

I must say that I, for one, will be in line to get this book. For those of you who have had the pleasure of his company, you already know what a treat is in store for you. For those who aren't that familiar with Paddy, you may take my word. If you want to read a biography about a man who has lived a life most people could only wish for, this book will be a delightful retreat from the everyday world the majority of us inhabit.

The Armoury in San Francisco, which provides most of us with all of our theatrical weapons, has moved to a new location. They are expanding due to great business. I think we can be held accountable for some of their successes. Their new address is:

The Armoury
1180 Folsom Street
San Francisco, Ca.
Phone: (415) 863-7911

CHRISTOPHER VILLA (Affiliate) is still working at the Armoury in San Francisco. (The Armoury has recently moved to a new location.) Chris is now in the midst of re-writing his swash-buckler Sinbad in the Land of the Amazons, which is being produced by a company in San Francisco this spring.

SOCIETY NEWS

ERIC BOOTH (Affiliate) recently finished playing Hamlet at the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival as well as assisting in the choreography of the fight scenes for that play. He is presently acting professionally in New York.

DAVID BOUSHEY recently choreographed the fights for A Tale of King Arthur for the Poncho Children's Theater in Seattle. He will be choreographing Romeo & Juliet for the Univ. of Utah and Macbeth for the Seattle Opera in the near future.

SAMUEL BRUCE CAMBELL (Affiliate) is spending a great deal of his time writing. He recently played the part of Secuto in Androcles & the Lion. He also did a film in which he played the part of a member of a motorcycle street gang.

PATRICK CREAM (Honorary) is at it again, having recently choreographed the fights for Macbeth at the Stratford (Canada) Shakespeare Festival. He is now working in conjunction with Erik Fredricksen on Joe Papp's productions of Julius Caesar and Coriolanus. Also, he just completed Joan of Arc and Don Giovanni for the Canadian Opera Company. Between professional engagements, he is conducting various fight workshops throughout Canada and the U.S.

ERIK FREDRICKSEN is choreographing the fights for Joe Papp's productions of Julius Caesar and Coriolanus. He recently finished

acting in Makassers Reef at the Seattle A.C.T.

BYRON JENNINGS just finished acting with the Pacific Conservatory of the Performing Arts. He is now teaching armed and unarmed combat at Hancock College in Santa Maria, Ca. The college is directly tied to the Pacific Conservatory.

JOSEPH MARTINEZ recently did a lecture/demonstration at the national A.T.A. conference in New Orleans. He is now back in Wisconsin, teaching at The Valley Studio in Spring Green, Wisc. NOTE: We apologize for stating in the last issue of "The Fight Master" that Ron Martell recently completed an apprenticeship in blacksmithing in Oregon as well as doing the fights in Richard III for the Museum Theater in Virginia. Actually, this was Joe Martinez. We hope that Joe accepts our apology for this error and, NO!, the editor will not accept an appointed date and time with seconds to resolve this dilemma. We sincerely hope a verbal apology will suffice.

PETER MOORE (Affiliate) is acting in three different shows with the Cricket Theater in Minneapolis, Minn. He still intends to open his own Salle, which will incorporate both stage fighting and competition fencing. He hopes the Salle will become a reality sometime in January.

PETER PHILLIPS (Affiliate) has recently returned from London where he directed Tis Pity She's A Whore at the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art.

ABOUT THE SOCIETY

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded in May 1977. Its aims are to promote the art of fight choreography in such a manner that the Fight Director will be accepted as an integral part of the theater and cinema industry. Promoting the aesthetics of well-conceived fight choreography as an integral part of the total production is another aim of the society.

Full members are professional Fight Directors.

Affiliate members are fencing masters in drama schools, overseas members, or Fight Directors of limited experience.

Friends are people interested in stage fighting but who are not necessarily connected with professional fight directing.

Student members are drama students who aspire to become Fight Directors.

Society Rules

Members are reminded that only full members may use the Society's name to secure employment, however; affiliate and student members may use their status in any capacity other than securing employment.

Inquiries about membership and editorial articles should be mailed to the Society's permanent address:

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS
4720 38th N.E.
Seattle, Wa. 98105



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