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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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## The Cutting Edge, November/December 1991, Vol. 2 Issue 6

The Society of American Fight Directors

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Volume II, Issue 6

Newsletter for the Society of American Fight Directors

November/December 1991

# F. Y. I.

#### Assistants & Journeymen

Certified teachers who want to be assistants and certified actor/ combatants who'd like to be journeymen/women should send a letter of intent, resumé and list of combat training to David Leong ASAP! The 1992 NSCW is in Las Vegas July 13-31.

#### **Desperately Seeking David**

So, you have decided to write to David Leong (see above). THEREFORE, you need his new address! Here 'tis:

244 W. 54th Street, 8th floor New York, NY 10019

Ph: 212-685-1271

#### J.R. Lives!

Not Ewing, but SAFD fight master John Robert Beardsley. Only he, too, is at a new address:

2233 Grant, #13 Berkley, CA 94703

Ph: 415-704-8220

#### Hand Over Your Money!

'Tis the season to remember to pay your dues. SAFD members owe \$25.00 in dues. Dues should be received by January 31, 1992! Make checks payable to SAFD & mail to Richard Raether, 1834 Camp Ave., Rockford, IL 61103.

#### Joel Says Thanks

Joel Mason sends thanks to all who sent resumes for the Boston tour of *Cyrano* and *Three Musketeers*. David Engel won the roles of Cyrano and Athos. Stephen "Popeye" Eliasson is Richelieu, among other roles, and Delia Ford is Roxanne and the Queen.

Joel says he's hanging on to all resumes for a possible future tour of *Romeo and Juliet*.

## Applicants Sought for 1992 Teacher Training Workshop

The SAFD will offer a Teacher Training Workshop in 1992 at the University of Nevada-Las Vegas, running concurrently with the National Stage Combat Workshop.

The fourth TTW will be headed by President J. Allen Suddeth and Vice President Drew Fracher, and is limited to twelve students only.

Students applying for the TTW must submit the following:

- Letter of intent, acting resumé, fight resumé, teaching resumé.
- Three current letters of recommendation attesting to applicant's ability to teach stage combat.
- Copy of actor/combatant certificate(s) or equivalent (i.e., certification from the British Society of Fight Directors)
- 4. List of schools attended and degree(s)
- 5. List of private/university combat training, years, teachers
- 6. Ten-minute video (¹/2-inch VHS) of applicant teaching a class. Tape must be clear, audible, and demonstrate the teaching style/technique of applicant. Tape must be cued up and have applicant's name on it. Tapes will not be returned—don't send a one-of-a-kind.

TTW students will undergo a series of advanced classes including:

- Technique in six disciplines: rapier & dagger; broadsword; unarmed; broadsword/shield; smallsword; quarterstaff
- Fight test choreography
- Syllabus construction
- Leadership skills
- Historical weaponry
- Theatre history
- Performance skills
- First aid
- Coaching
- Acting the fight
- Notation
- Private and university classes

Students will observe teaching techniques of the fight masters, coach NSCW students, work with seven fight masters in special

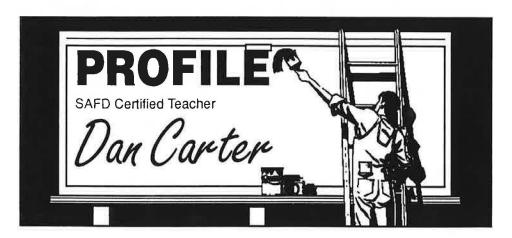
lecture/demonstrations, and choreograph. Students will have access to video equipment to review and critique their work.

Students in the TTW will have the opportunity to become certified teachers within the SAFD. However, acceptance into the program does not guarantee certification. Teacher certification is in three distinct parts: a practical section, an oral section, and a written test.

The SAFD wants and needs trained teachers to carry the torch. The certified teachers are the future of the SAFD.

Send application materials to: J. Allen Suddeth, President SAFD 131 Linden Ave. Glen Ridge, NJ 07028





Dan Carter insists that he just happened to fall into this stage combat business. "I was an actor, stage manager, director for about fourteen years, starting right out of college. I fell into stage combat along the way. I had a smattering of training from different people in fits and starts along the way, worked with a few actors and directors who had some training. I had taken competitive fencing in college as a

P.E. course. I was always drawn to it. Whenever I was in a play, when they came to a scuffle they'd say, 'Who's going to do this?' I was always the one saying, 'I will!' So mostly I ended up staging the fighting in whatever play I was in; I did a fair amount of it over the years."

When Dan went back to school for a graduate degree, he decided to get some formal stage combat training. "I'd seen the brochures for SAFD

workshops over the years. Stage combat had always interested me; I had a lot of background in it...so I ended up in Memphis in 1985."

Dan's debut at the 1985 NSCW was a memorable one. As students gathered on the first day, "There were people in the aisle blocking my way, so I hopped over some seats to go around them, missed a step and sprained my ankle *very* severely literally two minutes before the workshop began." Despite that ill-omened beginning Dan has been at every NSCW since then, as either a student or assistant.

During the remainder of the year, Dan leads a double life, working as an administrator at Florida State in Talahassee, and serving as resident fight director at the Asolo Theatre 300 miles away in Sarasota, where he also teaches stage combat in the MFA program.

Asked to single out a favorite among the plays he has choreographed, Dan came up with two. A production of Les Liaison Dangerouse, turned out to be "a very happy experience." As both principal duellists were Florida residents, Dan was able to spend literally months training his Valmont and Danceny. "The surprising thing was that they loved the

training the first day; and they loved it still when the show opened. I was happy with the choreography ...of course I'll probably look at a tape of the show a year from now and cringe..." However, Dan's sentimental favorite is a production of *Mr. Roberts*, a show he's done four times (so far). The third production Dan was involved with was at the Burt Reynolds Dinner Theatre, with Joshua Logan (co-author and director of the original production) directing. It was a favorite with Dan for several reasons: his father is an old navy man; production was good; the fight turned out well and it was Dan's introduction to Burt Reynolds.

"He was coming in to view a rehearsal and everyone said, 'Well, we've got to show him something—let's show him the fight!' Well, he came up to me after the rehearsal—I hadn't met him before—and asked me if I'd done that fight. I said yes; he said, 'That's a real kick-ass fight!' I ended up doing three films with him and a couple of other shows. So Mr. Roberts remains a sentimental favorite of mine."

"... choreography should advance the plot, illuminate the characters, excite the audience, and expand the limits of theatricality ..."

Dan draws on both his acting back-ground and his directorial skills when he's choreographing. "The actor has a piece of the story to tell, but the director is the story teller. However, I was an actor for so long, that I know what an actor needs. And I have a few rules for myself; the choreography should advance the plot, illuminate the characters, excite the audience, and expand the limits of theatricality within the reality of the particular production."

An avid sports fan, Dan's favorite advice to his fighters comes from the sports world. "Someone once asked legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wood how he got his team to play so tight and win so consistently. He replied, 'I tell my players to play fast, but don't hurry.' That's a principle I try to use with my actors. If twelve things have to occur in a fight, all twelve things have to happen in sequence. You can't skip any of them. However, you only give each thing the time it requires. If you have to make eye contact, it may take only an eighth of a second, but you have to make eye contact. That's playing fast, but not hurrying!"

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## What's Happening?

Jack Young has left Duke University's drama program to become artistic director of the Warehouse Theatre, South Carolina's only Equity theatre, in Greenville,

David Boushey recently coordinated stunts for two feature films, Past Midnight and The Hand that Rocks the Cradle. On stage, he choreographed Henry V at the Pioneer Theatre.

Rick Sordelet did fights for The Vagabond King at the New England Lyric Operetta. In addition, he played villain Thibault D'Assiney and reports, "I got into a broadsword battle and a knife fight, I killed a pretty girl and got knifed in the stomach and thrown from a seven foot platform onto a table. Man, was that fun!"

Other projects for Rick include As You Like It at the Pearl Theatre, Extremities for Rutgers University, Wrath of the Medusa at the Sanford Meisner Theatre, Wake Up, Lou Rise for Circle Repertory, and Greetings for the Barrow Street Theatre Company.

Geof Alm spent the fall choreographing Streetcar for Intiman Theatre, The Firebird with an all-Russian cast for Seattle Children's Theatre, and an adventure-musical entitled (get this!) Jungle Queen Debutante.

J. Allen Suddeth kept to a busy summer and fall schedule, staging fights for Romeo and Juliet for Hudson Valley Shakespeare, Julius Caesar and As You Like It for North Carolina Shakespeare Festival, and in New York, Life is A Dream for Lincoln Center.

He and David Leong spent two glorious weeks teaching stage combat at Celebration Barn Theatre before heading to Vegas for the NSCW. Fall saw him choreographing Le Bourgeois Gentilhomme, and staging occasional violence for The Guiding Light as well as teaching at Julliard, Lee Strasberg and ACTS (Actors' Combat Training School).

Dr. Robert W. Dillon directed his own adaptation of *The Merry Wives of Windsor* this past summer and directed T.S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral* in historic St. Vincent's Cathedral in Cape Girardeau, MO. Incidentally, Thomas Becket was murdered with Rod Casteel bastard swords.

James Finney says g'day from Australia, where he has been keeping busy doing fights for Naming the Waves, Mad Forest, Twelfth Night, Macbeth, and two films—Loose Ends and Collisions. James has obtained a grant to direct and produce his own play Body Parts in October at the Arts Festival in Perth.

Michael Chin staged the fights for The Rover at the Quinapalus Theatre Co. in New York.

John Scheidler recently staged a barroom brawl and a railroad rescue for Wild Oats at Western Michigan University, as well as teaching some unarmed basics to an acting class.

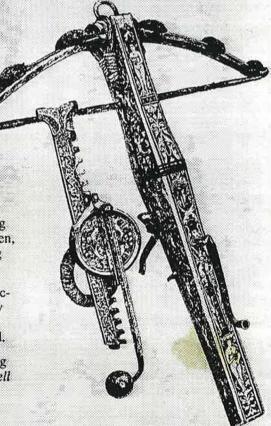
Payson Burt spent a swashbuckling summer at the Penn. Ren. Faire as Head Armorer, where he was in charge of maintaining all weaponry at the faire, as well as construction of leather belts and hangers. He also performed in a comic swordfighting show entitled The Duo of Woo. He's currently portraying Rudyard Kipling in A Charles Dickens Past. In between, he's well into his sixth year teaching stage combat at Temple University.

Brad Waller has been in production and has a new baby girl to show for it—Lillian Kathleen, born September 23. Congratulations, Dad.

Jim Robinson has been wearing three hats in All's Well That Ends Well in at American Stage in Florida, choreographing, assistant directing, and performing. Shelly McKnight Russell-Parks and Tom Laitinen performed the NSCW rapier/dagger test fight for her theater students at the beginning of the school year and were besieged by requests for more "sword stuff." Meanwhile, she's been designing costumes for a new play called Beast and working on a new play about Mary Shelley and Frankenstein.

Todd Loweth worked with Chris Villa at the Penn. Ren. Faire and directed Shakespeare Fighting and assorted street fights.

Bob Walsh has staged fights for Good Night, Desdemona ... Good Morning, Juliet in Cambridge, MA, Twelfth Night for the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival, and The Circle for New Repertory Theatre in Boston.



## On affairs of honor ...

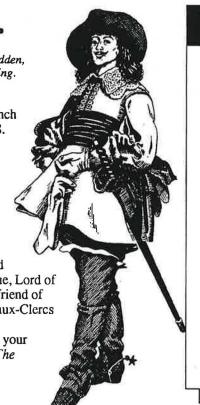
Fight on all occasions; fight the more for duels being forbidden, since consequently, there is twice as much courage in fighting.

The advice D'artagnan's father gives him is not surprising when you consider that an estimated 8,000 French gentlemen lost their lives in duels between 1598 and 1608. This, in spite of the fact that Henry IV officially banned duelling in 1599. Of course, Henry didn't pay any more attention to his ordinance than his subjects did; he himself fought several duels (by proxy) and gave out over 7,000 letters of pardon to duelling offenders.

It was the infamous Cardinal Richelieu who, in 1626, instigated a new ban on duelling and attempted to enforce it. But, as evidenced by the the intrepid three musketeers of Dumas' tale, clandestine duelling continued to flourish. This resulted in tragedy for Armand de Sillegue, Lord of Athos, the real-life model for the brooding, world-weary friend of D'artagnan, who was killed by a sword thrust on the Pre-aux-Clercs on December 21, 1643.

Thank you, Mr. Dumas, for arranging things better in your novels, where Athos lived to fight the good fight in both *The Three Musketeers* and *Twenty Years After*.

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## THE CUTTING EDGE

The Cutting Edge is concocted bimonthly by Margaret and Richard Raether (with sporadic help from Brian Anderson) and is a publication of the Society of American Fight Directors.

Submissions to the Cutting Edge should be sent to:

Richard Raether 1834 Camp Avenue Rockford, IL 61103





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