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The Society of American Fight Directors

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The Society of American Fight Directors

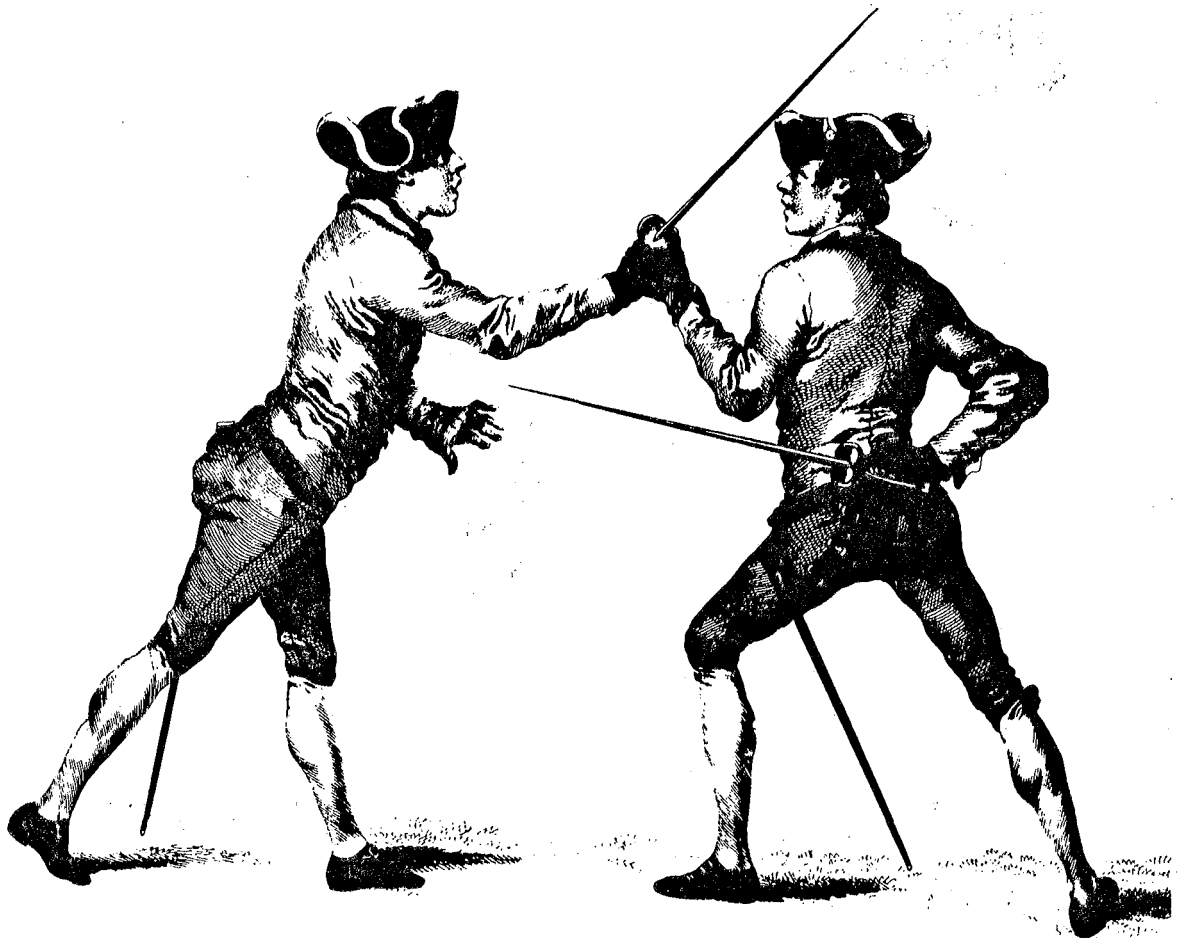
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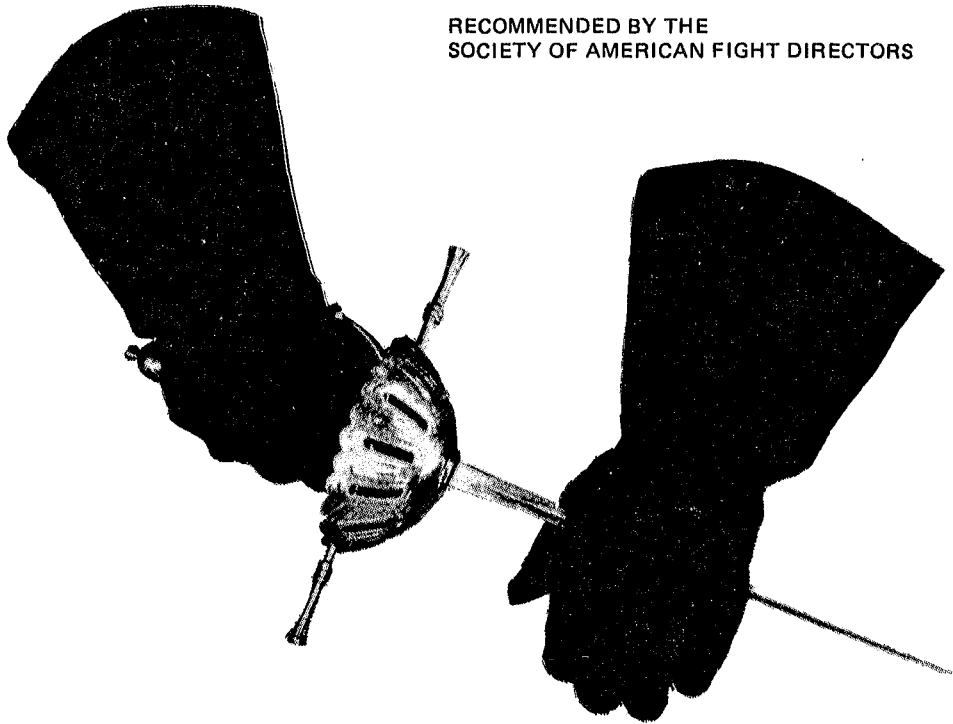


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THE FIGHT MASTER

The Magazine of the Society of American Fight Directors.

No. 13

APRIL 1981

Editor - Ann C. Long

Lay-out - David L. Boushey

Typed and Duplicated by Ann C. Long

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded by David Boushey and incorporated in Seattle, Washington, in May, 1977.

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the society..of
american
fight directors

National Stage Combat Training
Program - Summer 1981

July 21 - August 7

at The University of Michigan

what they say...

...about last summer's S.A.F.D. Training Program, winner of the North American Institute of Summer Sessions National Merit Award:

- None of my previous training in stage combat had provided me with such comprehensive study and practice...plus the opportunity to work with three of the foremost American fight masters...Of immeasurable value to anyone in the business of training theatre practitioners...

Michael Sokoloff, Movement Coach
MFA Acting/Directing Program
Indiana University

- A wonderful experience...excellent instruction in every area covered... far beyond my expectations and very enjoyable...

Kay Aoyama, Canadian Fencing Coach
Former Canadian National Women's Foil Champion;
U. S. National Finalist

- The stage combat workshop was a thrilling experience...the clarity of the teaching was a valuable lesson in itself and a joy...

Christopher Villa, Professional Actor and Fight Arranger

welcome to michigan...

The purpose of the National Stage Combat Training program is to train teachers, theatre students, and performing artists in the theoretical and practical aspects of armed and unarmed stage combat. This intensive summer program, designed specifically for American and Canadian artists, offers invaluable instruction.

Certification for proficiency in stage combat will be offered through the training program, with academic credit arranged individually upon request. (For credit information, call 313-763-5213). Affiliation with Society of American Fight Directors is optional.

The Department of Theatre and Drama and the University of Michigan are pleased to sponsor this unique program in Ann Arbor.

registration ...

Participants are required to send a resume; indicate any additional stage combat training or experience.

INSTRUCTION: Three nationally known stage combat experts, with special guest Patrick Crean, internationally renowned teacher and choreographer. Six-eight hours of daily instruction, five days per week.

HOUSING: Double occupancy dormitory housing on The University of Michigan campus.

EQUIPMENT: All combat weapons provided, but we encourage you to bring heavy gloves, your own foils, daggers, swords, and equipment if you have them available.

DEADLINE: For registration, May 1, 1981. We invite your early registration, as only 40 students will be accepted.

REGISTRATION: Please use registration form and send both \$100 non-refundable registration fee and resume.

For more information, write: U-M Professional Theatre Program, Michigan League, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48109.

NEWS FROM THE ARMOURY

The Armoury has been making significant strides to better improve the quality of their weapons stock. The most important, and long-awaited, advancement to come to fruition is the use of manganese steel in the making of their weapons. You can now order weapons with manganese hilts that include manganese guards, guillons, knuckle bows, pommels and grips. We all know the problems of the past with the standard "pot-metal" guillons, etc. We spent more money on replacement parts than we did on the original weapons over a given span of time. The Armoury has now perfected (for the most part) the use of the durable manganese steel to replace the outmoded pot-metal. The manganese parts are a little heavier than the standard parts of the past, but not to a point of being cumbersome.

A member can now buy any part of the hilt in manganese. If one so desires, he can order an article 6 with the lighter pierced guard and build around it the manganese guillons, knuckle bow, grip and pommel. He can use any combination. He can order just the manganese guillon which has always been the most breakable part. Of course, the blades remain the standard steel, and I might suggest that if a member is ordering the standard epee blade, that he order the "Italian" blade which is thicker at the forte than the "French" blade, which makes it look a little larger and more durable. I found the Italian epee blade with the "all manganese" hilt a very good looking, durable fighting rapier.

Keep in mind that the guard can be any of the standard guards of the past. I also liked the article 62 standard blade and aluminum cup (modern competition) in conjunction with a manganese guillon, knuckle bow, grip and pommel. You can have any combination of parts you want! The only manganese guard (cup) I saw was the one modeled after the article 6 pierced cup guard represented in the Armoury's catalogue. I personally prefer that particular style guard to all of the rest represented in the catalogue at this time.

The manganese advancement is not the only item to come forth. The Armoury is now ordering a "Shalger" blade from Germany that is thicker and more true to the actual rapier blade of the 16th and 17th centuries. The Armoury has two different styles, #1 and #2. The #2 is larger and would be best suited for theatrical rapier use. The Shalger blades are still somewhat untried in true theatrical application over a period of time, but the people at the Armoury tell me that they have been "banging them around" and they appear very durable and nick very little. This can be another breakthrough in weaponry, as we all know the standard epee blade is rather small for the true

rapier, but we have had little choice in the past because of the lack of a better blade that is not only durable and light but also replaceable. The Shalger blade is roughly 3/4" in diameter and tapers slightly to a rounded off point.

Lastly, the Armoury is now offering a terrific maine-gouche type dagger for rapier and dagger work. It involves cutting down the hilt on their 16th century swept hilt weapon. The swept bars are modified and either a 1" blade or a 3/4" blade is put in it. It looks far more lethal than the cut down epee blade. They have a number of wider blades that they are cutting down to give the dagger a fiercer look. With the larger daggers and the Shalger blades, weapons may start to look for more authentic than they have in the past.

All of these improvements are significant. Those of us in the area of fight choreography and instruction owe a debt of thanks to the Armoury for its efforts to improve upon the weapons we now use in pursuing our chosen field.

If you have any questions about their weapons in general, or specifically, the new manganese hilts, the Shalger blades or the new fighting and parrying daggers, please call The Armoury at their number in San Francisco (415) 863-7911.

D. L. Boushey

THE MATRIX OF STAGE VIOLENCE

Part I of II Parts

By Craig Turner

Fight directors can't forget that combat skills only mean something in a theatrical moment. Techniques of stage fighting must be balanced continually with the needs of the characters involved, the environment in which the fight takes place and the general style of the play. A stage fight, like any movement sequence on stage, is the end result, a by-product, of what the characters are doing.

We are quickly arriving, however, at a point where many who have been taught the basic techniques of fighting haven't had a similar growth in acting skills which support fighting. Fight choreography has been simplified and refined to where a teacher may present only a technique, and not necessarily one which makes sense in the total range of an actor's craft. Most students, in other words, are learning that fight technique will most likely be needed in a practical way, but few see it as an integrated part of the total range of their art.

We have a responsibility (particularly those of us who teach the same students over an extended period of time) not only to develop safe, effective methods of stage fighting, but also to discover and explore the potential for violence within each actor's talent. A fight teacher should see himself as someone who helps the actor extend his sense of truth.

The lack of integrated fight training becomes a choreographer's nightmare. Those of us who have worked in the professional rehearsal situation know how difficult it is to work with an untrained actor; but it is just as difficult to find the acting values within the fight. An actor who has never explored violence in his training cannot be expected to pick it up in a rehearsal.

At this point the fight master is caught. Professional situations do not offer time to give lessons in emotionally and physically supporting a fight scene. Furthermore, directors rarely cast on the ability to look convincing in fights. The fight master is often stuck with an actor who is perfect for all levels of the character's expression except the fighting.

The proper place to solve this problem is in training. There is time and context for such work, and intensity and confidence are developed out of the teacher-student relationship. Fighting as part of the actor's total training helps an actor see himself as a potential creature of violence, able to be violent for an artistic purpose.

Like it or not, fight teachers and choreographers need to teach "fight acting."

Stage fighting, by my definition, is an acting style. It is a way of moving, reacting, and gaining character objectives--a matrix of events which result in apparent physical harm. The moment we forget that stage fighting is a by-product of the actor's main business--making a character statement--we are left with a display of physical skills without an appropriate context.

What follows is a series of ideas and suggestions that fight teachers should seriously consider including in their curriculum. These are not tidbits or games to fill out class time or to be inserted at random, but a development of the actor's physical and imaginative skills that lay the proper base from which fighting techniques may grow.

It is important to prepare the body and mind for the stresses of combat in three preliminary ways: 1) developing muscular strength, 2) emphasizing flexibility of joints, and 3) exercising powers of concentration and imagery.

I have returned to calisthenics as a way of developing muscular strength. Applied with good form and concentration on the muscle groups used, such exercises provide a base from which strong, quick, and controlled movements develop. Not only are strength and awareness increased, but metabolism and reaction time are accelerated.

For example, a simple push-up, done with full concentration, focuses on the primary muscle movers, and emphasis on the negative (or lowering) stage of the movement can become a real challenge. Depending on the form, push-ups focus on arm or chest strength. The constant attempt to increase repetitions develops strong focus and will--qualities important to a good stage fighter--as well as endurance to last a long fight. Abdominal crunches, jumping jacks, half-squats and other classic exercises, when used intelligently, work well.

Balance the strength work with stretching exercises. A tense muscle cannot contract with maximum speed, but a totally relaxed muscle is also quite slow in reaction time. Strive for balance, and emphasize the proper images in stretching. Any actor will immediately see and feel the difference between a hamstring stretch done just to get the head to the knees, and one done by extending up the spine, through extended arms, and beyond the feet; an entirely different series of releases will be felt. How far the actor can stretch is not as crucial as attention to the muscles involved. Remember to encourage easy exhalation when stretching and not to bounce; static stretching is more productive.

Strength and stretching cannot be overemphasized. Not only do

these basic qualities of movement underlie all stage fighting from the simplest slap to the longest and most energetic brawl, but they tune the body up to a higher level of awareness and action. By concentrating on these movements, an actor's mind and imagination key in to what his body is doing and on subtleties of movement--good not only for fight preparation but for the acting process. By going into such detail and taking preparation seriously, an actor has a greater context within which acting and fighting through the body make more sense. The breathing, stretches, contractions, specific image focus and speeded reaction time become basic building blocks for the later fight work.

Physical preparation needs time to set in and should not be rushed. But once developed, trust between students needs to follow. A good fight, of course, develops rhythmically and technically in such a way that the fighters involved can anticipate and rely on one another. But the ability to open up and rely on others is a basic quality that all good actors should have; no matter how threatening the situation, they trust themselves to act appropriately. Proper training in this next sequence not only speeds a student's combat training, but also gives him the confidence to take space aggressively, establish rhythms, and remove blocks to impulses.

(to be continued in next issue)

POLEARMS

Any chopping, slashing, thrusting or mauling weapon, mounted on a long handle, falls into the polearm category. The handle began as a cylindrical pole or shaft and later took on an octagonal shape to strengthen the grip. Frequently the handle was covered with cloth or velvet, originally to give a better grip and later for decorative purposes. Brass studs were added for the same reasons. Very often there would be some sort of fringe or animal hair bound around the shaft just below the weapon which is it believed was originally used to keep rain and blood from running down the shaft and causing a slippery grip. although in the end this, too, became highly decorative in nature.

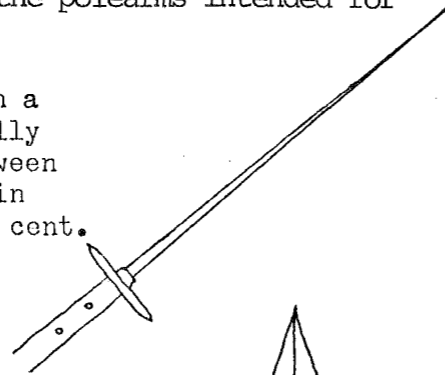
Many of the polearms were secured, shaft to weapon, with long cheek-pieces, straps of metal that descended some way down the shaft. These were added protection against the swordcut that might sever weapon from shaft leaving the soldier with only a rough form of the quarterstaff. The average polearm shaft was approximately seven feet long, although some pikes did reach as much as twenty-two feet in length.

Polearms were originally used by militia and infantrymen, many of them actually deriving from agricultural implements put together by farmers of various nations. They were used by the masses primarily because they were easy to construct and cheap to obtain. Polearms were basically intended for use against the mounted opponent, being a means of thrusting, hooking, pushing, or pulling the rider off the horse to the ground where he could be dealt with more effectively. Occasionally there were combats fought between groups of polearm bearers on the ground, such as when halberdiers were called in to chop the shafts of advancing pike formations, but for most purposes polearms were fairly unwieldly for a bout between two grounded combatants. When combats were fought between two opponents, both with polearms, the shaft was frequently used in a similar fashion to the quarterstaff along with the particular function of whichever weapon was mounted.

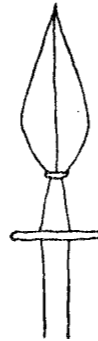
There is probably more confusion about polearms than any other class of weapons. The fact that there are so many types from so many places causes them to be called by the same names when they shouldn't be, and by different names when they should be the same. Various sources invariably disagree on the subject. What follows is information I have collected basically from "Stone's Glossary" and from the polearm collection at the Higgins Armoury, of which I have written in the past. Other sources may differ in instances; my intention is not to dispute these questions, but rather to inform you of the polearms I have discovered in my studies.

The polearms will be displayed alphabetically as opposed to chronologically, and each will be accompanied by a diagram and a brief description. They will also be arranged in groups according to their functions; thrusting, cutting, thrusting and cutting, and those meant for special purposes. We will begin with the polearms intended for thrusting.

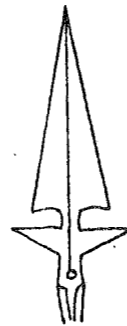
AWL PIKE: a long, slim, awl-like head with a square cross-section, and usually a round or octagonal guard between head and shaft, of German origin used primarily during the 15th cent.



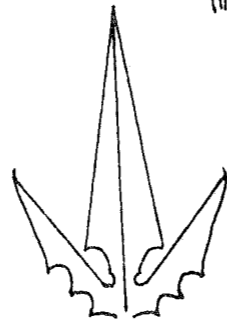
BOAR SPEAR: a hunting spear with a broad, leaf-shaped head with a crosspiece below it, crosspiece was meant to prevent the boar from running up the shaft towards hunter, later used in war during the 16th cent.



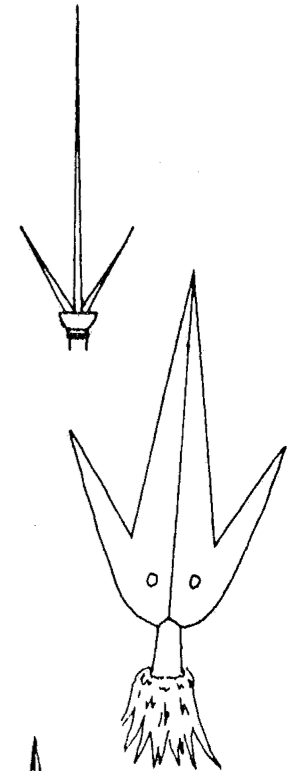
BOHEMIAN EAR-SPOON: a long, broad, pointed head with two triangular projections at the base, used during 15th cent.



CHAUVES SOURIS: also known as bat-wing korseke, a long, broad, triangular blade with two shorter blades projecting up from base, used during 15th cent.



FEATHER STAFF: a rather exotic polearm used by off-duty officers during the 17th cent., a shaft of about the size of a cane which concealed one long blade and two short ones which ejected into position for use.

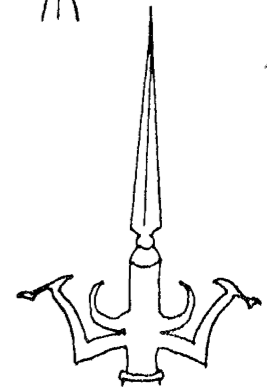


KORSEKE: a long, broad, point in the middle with two shorter points upraised on either side, used primarily during 15th cent.

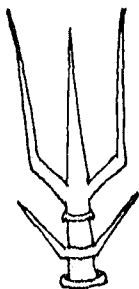
LANGUE DE BOEUF: sometimes called ox tongue, had a long rectangular blade, double-edged, ending in a thrusting point, 16th cent.



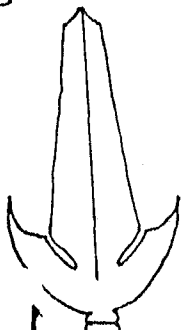
LINSTOCK: a pike with branches on each side to hold lit matches for the cannons, 16th and 17th cent.



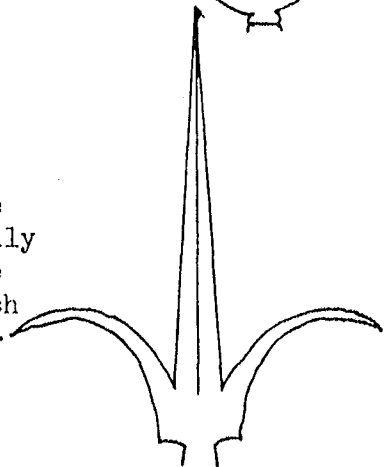
MILITARY FORK: derived from the peasant agricultural fork, it varies greatly in shape consisting mainly of upturned prongs and hooks, 14th through 18th cent.



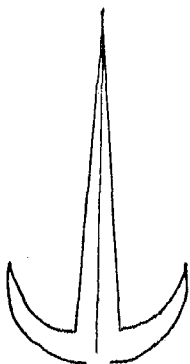
PARTIZAN: a broad, double-edged blade of some length in the middle with two very short, very wide upturned blades at the base, blades vary a great deal in shape, particularly the weapon of the guards of dignitaries, it still is used in ceremonial form.



SPETUM: from the Italian spido (to spit) the spetum is a member of the korseke family with a long, narrow blade in the middle and two narrow blades on the side which first curve up and then end in a downward point, used during 16th cent.



RUNKA: another member of the korseke family, also known as ranson or ranseur, a long, narrow blade in the middle and two narrow blades on the side which curve up and end in upward points, used during 15th and 16th cent.



SPONTOON: like a small partizan, a short wide blade with branches or lugs on either side at the base, carried by color sergeants in the British army until the end of the 18th cent.



Next group: polearms intended for cutting only.

BERDICHE: generally a cutting weapon, it was occasionally used for thrusting when the end of its curved blade was equipped with a suitable point, a very long, curved, narrow axe blade fitted to the staff from an eye in the middle of back of blade and also secured by a projection at bottom of blade, used from 15th to 17th cent.



FAUCHARD: a broad, single-edged blade curved on the cutting edge with an ornamental prong or prongs on the back of blade, used during the 16th cent.



GLAIVE: sometimes called couse, a broad, single-edged blade that curves back near point, some forms with small lugs at base, believed to have originated as merely a knife lashed to a staff, 12th and 13th cent.



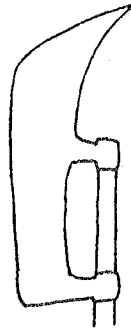
POLE AXE: an axe blade mounted on a pole with a spike or hammer opposite, some forms such as the Jedburg and Lochaber axes were equipped with a gaff hook opposite, 13th through 15th cent.



SCYTHE: a long, curved, single-edged blade, basically an agricultural implement used by peasants during uprisings as late as the 18th cent.

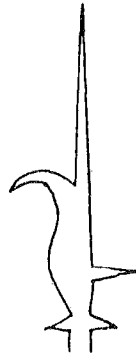


VOULGE: a broad, single-edged blade curving back at the top and connected to the shaft by two eyes, one in the middle of back of blade and one on the bottom of back of blade, 14th through 17th cent.

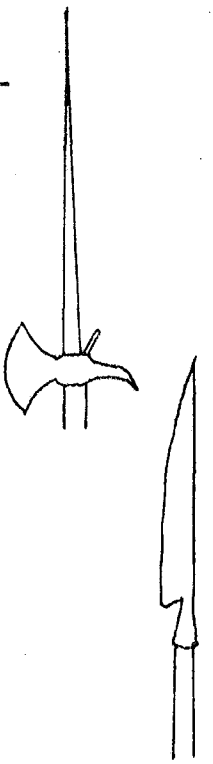


Next group: polearms intended for cutting and thrusting.

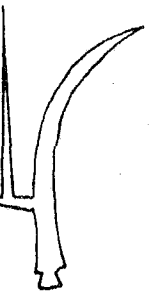
BILL: one of the first polearms, early English rallying cry was "bows and bills", originally an agricultural implement, a broad blade with an outward curve at top and a variety of spikes and hooks protruding from the back and end, 14th through 17th cent.



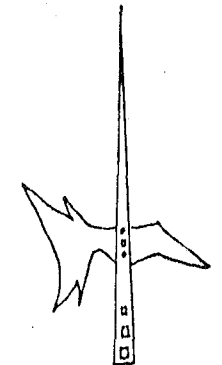
BRANDESTOC: a hatchet or hammer with a long blade concealed in the shaft which was ejected for thrusting purposes, 16th and 17th cent.



COUTEAU DE BRECHE: a member of the glaive family, same blade as a glaive only with a defined point in line with shaft to allow thrusting, 15th to 17th cent.

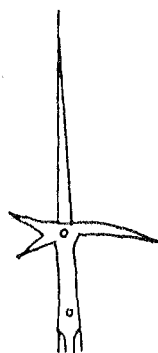


GUISARME: a member of the bill family, described as many things it is generally believed to be a slender, incurved sword blade from the back edge of which a sharp hook or spike issues, 11th to 15th cent.



HALBERD: most common polearm, an axe blade with a beak or point opposite and a long spike or blade on the end, developed by the Swiss it became extremely ceremonial and is still used today by royal guards, 13th through 18th cent.

LUCERNE HAMMER: the only polearm used with any frequency by the knight, a species of pole axe with a hammer head of four points opposite a single spike with a long, straight spike on the end, 15th cent.

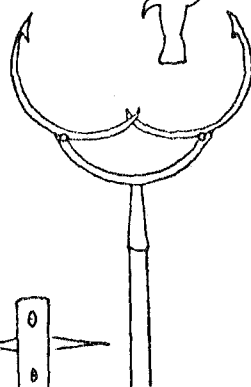


SCORPION: a variety of weapons were called by this name though the most common was roughly a combination of bill and halberd, 15th through 17th cent.

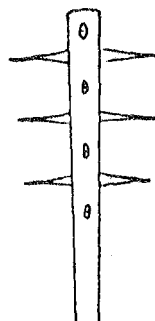


Next group: polearms meant for special purposes.

CATCH POLE: various designs, basically a pole with a fork equipped with springs that snap shut to prevent a man from removing his neck once encircled, used to unhorse riders and to transport felons, 16th through 18th cent.

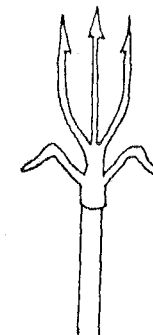


HOLY WATER SPRINKLER: name derived from the church implement, a wooden or iron head with a number of protruding spikes, a common peasant weapon, 14th through 17th cent.



QUARTERSTAFF: simply a long staff, originally named for the method of use, in which the hands manipulated the staff in quarters, 13th through 17th cent.

SCALING FORK: a military fork with a hook attached so it could be used to scale walls, 15th through 18th cent.



There are, of course, many spears and polearms of other countries around the globe which I have not mentioned, my intention being to familiarize readers with the European stock.

The polearm offers a unique weapon seldom used for stage combat purposes. By combining quarterstaff techniques with the functions of the particular weapon, the polearm is a very interesting stage arm and one that perhaps we will see more and more of in the future.

Jerome Smith



By Joseph Martinez

The following pages are from a section of the soon-to-be released (August) book on Combat Mime by Mr. Martinez. It stems from the chapter on choreography and is an example of the typical rehearsal process for hand-to-hand fighting.

It should be noted that Joe is one of the foremost fight choreographers in the country and his knowledge of unarmed combat makes this upcoming book a must for all teachers and students of unarmed combat.

Rehearsal Process

A. Conceptualization

1. Make creative decisions after speaking to the director, designers, and the actors.
2. Write the fight down, either in long hand, or using the notation system outlined in this book.
3. Write down a tentative rehearsal schedule for the entire rehearsal period up to the opening night performance, and check the schedule out with the director, assistant director or stage manager.

- #### B.
1. Devise a warm-up for the combatants to do prior to every rehearsal session, and do not vary from faithfully executing the warm-up on a regular basis.
 2. In group rehearsals, choose the most physically adept combatant and have s/he conduct the warm-up or have a different individual conduct the warm-up for each session.

- #### C.
1. Train the combatants beginning with the simplest techniques first, with no concern whether they are in the order in which they'll be performed in the actual fight. You are developing trust between partners.
 2. Work on the most difficult techniques next, so as to give the combatants plenty of time to master them.
 3. Teach technique combinations which will be used in the actual fight so that the principles and practices of eye contact and awareness be instilled during transitions. Spend time on transitions and developing convincing pain or vocal reactions.

D. Choreography

1. Describe the fight verbally to the combatants, so that they get some kind of idea what you're aiming for. Give them a general idea of what you want in relation to style and mood. Be careful not to frighten the combatants by demanding too much from them too soon. Assure them that they are very capable of executing the described fight and that you will be working quite slowly and carefully.
2. Begin to learn and practice the most difficult combinations first. It doesn't matter whether you begin at the beginning, middle or end of the fight. There will be time to rehearse the correct sequence once the techniques and combinations are mastered. Always work on short pieces of the routine. It is important that the fighters gain confidence by being successful and sure of themselves before moving on.
3. Begin to link combinations and rehearse the longer sequences until they are familiar and safe. Keep the tempo-rhythm slower than the actual fight will be performed in performance. Even if the fighters claim that they are ready, keep them under a tight control. The longer they practice at a slow tempo-rhythm gaining absolute control over the combination of movements, the more it will pay off in the long run. Give them a copy of the notated fight and teach them how to read it, for reference and memorization.
4. Put the entire fight together in slow motion until it is completely memorized without any lapses in memory by any of the combatants. Then using a metronome, ortamborine, etc., begin to speed the fight up gradually over a number of rehearsals to the proper performance tempos. Begin with slow motion, then increase to 1/4 speed, 1/2 speed, 3/4 speed and performance tempo. If the fighters encounter problems with eye contact, physical control, balance, etc., don't speed up until they have mastered the problems at that tempo-rhythm. If the fight is being set to music, now is the time to be incorporating the recorded music, or the live musician, with segments of the fight.
5. Once the fight is learned and being performed at the proper tempo-rhythm for the production, begin to fine tune it in relation to style, characterization, etc. Remember that if you can change a part you will change the whole, and it is essential to repeat the whole process, starting very slowly with each change. If you change something and allow the combatants to incorporate the change too quickly, and an accident occurs--not only are you to blame, but the combatants may slide back miles in relation to confidence and trust.

6. Add costumes and lights, and work the fights again with these new elements in slow motion, 1/4, 1/2, 3/4 and performance speeds.
7. When performing the fight for the first time for an audience, even if that audience is only the director, have the combatants perform the fight at 1/2 speed first, then at full performance tempo—both times in front of the audience. This will acclimatize the combatants to the new tensions which invariably arise in a performance context.
8. Praise your combatants when they've done good work.



I recently spent three months in Los Bangeles teaching at California State University at Los Angeles.

While in Los Angeles I had the good fortune to observe and chat with Rod Colbin on a number of occasions. For those of you who are not familiar with Mr. Colbin, he is the grand patriarch of American Fight Directors. He did every major duel on Broadway for 25 years between 1948 and 1972. He was fight master for the Neighborhood Playhouse for 15 years between 1960 and 1975. His other roles as fight master include Columbia University, New York University and the American Music and Drama Academy. He was the fight director for the opening season of the Stratford, Connecticut, Shakespeare Festival and continued in that position for a number of years to follow.

To give you some idea as to how much influence he has had on various performers, some of the more noted ones whom he trained include Marlon Brando, James Dean, Christopher Plummer, Maximilian Schell, Jose Ferrer, Rex Harrison and Hume Cronyn.

His traveling fight troupe toured the East and Midwest portions of the country between 1966 and 1970. The name of his fight extravaganza was (and still is) "The Not so Deadly Art." This evening of swashbuckling was toured to the most remote part of the Midwest extending as far West as Nebraska. Such places as Storm Lake, Iowa, had the goof fortune to delight in the sometimes serious, sometimes not-so-serious exploits of the Colbin troupe.

One of the stories I enjoyed the most was one of his encounters in the hinterlands of Nebraska. His troupe had a "gig" at a monastery. He had requested that all of the wax be stripped from the playing surface before he began rehearsals for the gala evening. As things would have it, he got in a confrontation with Mother Superior over the fact that not only did the wax have to come off, but they could not practice choir rehearsals in the same space while he was trying to rehearse his people on the new space. He finally had to ask the nuns to stop singing or he would not do the show that evening. Up stepped Mother Superior and asked very specifically "Are you insisting that we stop singing?" and Rod answered yes! As a retort to that she countered, "Well, bless you!" Only it didn't sound too holy, if you know what I mean. The word "bless" could have easily been replaced by a four letter word which would have been somewhat unseemly coming from a Mother Superior!

Rod related many stories about his adventures into the unknowns of the Midwest. What was marvelous about his tour, besides the

terrific entertainment he provided, was the fact that many fencing clubs started up in these areas due to his influence.

Rod also spoke of the time he was on the Johnny Carson Show demonstrating his skills when Johnny decided to do some improvising of a fight scene. Rod had told him very specifically that he did not want to do a fight with him but Carson "laid-on" and as a consequence injured himself falling off his desk while in the midst of some daring-do improvisation. Rod said it served him right after having been warned that a fight was not in the offing. Twenty years later, going to a grand opening with an injured leg (from a fight), who does he happen to sit next to in the theatre? You guessed it! Johnny Carson. Everyone talks about Carson' memory for detail and sure enough, Carson took one glance to his side and said to Rod, "Serves you right." He obviously had remembered Rod from the encounter twenty-five years before!

Some of the films Rod Colbin has choreographed were the T.V. productions of The Three Musketeers and The Prisoner of Zenda.

He now acts a great deal in Hollywood and can be seen on many of the series now showing. You may remember him as the Roman Meal Baker in those commercials that ran for some time.

He doesn't emphasize his fight skills as much now because of his concentration on acting (I might mention that he has always been an actor--even in the hey-day of his fight reputation). He enjoys fighting still and has a studio in Hollywood where he trains would-be assassins in the art of weaponry. He has visions of eventually remounting his old show The Not so Deadly Art. First, he needs to train his combatants and I might add that he does indeed train them. He grouses at them perpetually for not being "specific" but I can tell you, I was pretty impressed to say the least.

So Rod hasn't left us; he is momentarily taking a hiatus to pursue a thriving acting career. His heart is still with us as he recently showed when he choreographed the futuristic duel on the Mork and Mindy Show. He loves the fight game and all of its ramifications. As vice-president of the S.A.F.A. he plans to take an active part in the future of our organization and all its members.

David L. Boushey

CAPTAIN PIRATE

Film Review

Columbia, 1952
Technicolor

This sequel to Sabatini's "Captain Blood Returns," directed by Ralph Murphy, and starring Louis Hayward and Patricia Medina, is a late-show offering that should prove entertaining, if not definitive. The original story by Sabatini holds true, despite a limp screenplay of unknown authorship. The action sequences are good to excellent, and clearly show some careful planning, good cinematography, and a bang-up cast of extras and stuntmen.

The story picks up immediately after the original which we are all familiar with. Perhaps a few weeks have gone by, not enough time for Blood to even marry the lovely Lady Elizabeth. Firmly ensconced in his Jamaican hacienda, complete with new-found respectability, Blood (Hayward) is unaware that an imposter has sacked Cartagena disguised as Blood himself. The authorities are quick to pounce, thinking that Blood is up to his old tricks. This early footage is very uneven, and a bit stagey, but promises later action.

We are finally treated to a very nice sequence, narrated by Lady Elizabeth which updates the story ostensibly for her father, but in reality for us. In rapid sequence, it tells the story of Blood's first adventures, and we get a chance to see Hayward in the identical scenes filmed for Flynn. We're treated to Blood's "crime", sentencing, a jail break, ship's boardings and on-deck action, group fights, and some good ship miniatures.

Meanwhile, back to the present, our hero finds that to save his skin, he must act himself to clear his name. With the help of a few old henchmen, Blood commandeers a Royal ship, under the command of Captain Evans. Of note here is the cutlass duel between Blood and Captain Evans. Blood must, of course, fight off first one, then two, then three sailors to get to Evans. There is some very good, tight blade work between the two, as they battle across the deck and, although evenly matched, they are parted by Blood's men with the fight unresolved. This clears the way, of course, for a rematch. Evans and his men are set adrift, and his parting shot to Blood is, "I'll find you! I'll find every one of you!!" Hayward here proves himself an able fencer, certainly better than Flynn in his day in the same role.

We are now well launched into the meat of the plot. Evans (our blackhearted villain) trying to stir up the civil authorities against

Blood, and personally prosecuting Lady Elizabeth and throwing her unceremoniously in prison. Blood meanwhile sails away to unravel the mystery of the imposter. Hayward shows some range here in various disguises as he tracks down clues. In Martinique, he is Captain Van Der Meer, and by way of a beautiful woman, he finds a jeweled necklace, unmistakably part of the loot from Cartagena. They agree to rendezvous later that night, and when Blood appears, he finds her dead, and the pirate Captain Easterly lurking behind the curtains. Easterly is a sinister character, and Blood suspects him greatly, but over rum Easterly relates that although the necklace was his, he'd purchased it from another--Coulivin. Blood thanks him, and exits after knocking him cold. Another short action sequence here, with Easterly's crew sticking up for him. Another word for the supporting cast, who look well rehearsed and well trained. At this point in the film, and through to the end, the action scenes outweigh the dialogue.

Closing in on the enemy, Blood and crew sail after Coulivin. Arriving at Santo Domingo, Blood learns that Coulivin lies ill, and needs a doctor. Well, Blood happens to be a doctor, so, in disguise once more, Blood waylays the real doctor and boards the ship himself. Coulivin wears a wicked sword wound in his leg and is immobilized, but who should appear at his bedside? None other than our Captain Evans. Blood escapes detection, but overhears Evans' plot to kidnap Lady Elizabeth from jail...and that he is, he wants her for himself.

In a final masterful coup, Blood, again disguised and with forged credentials, fools the Jamaican town fathers into believing that he has come to save them from the notorious Captain Blood. He oversees the moving of the Fort's cannon, and emptys the jail for labor (thus freeing Elizabeth). Much to the dismay of his crew, he makes them sink their own ship just inside the mouth of the harbor. Cannons blazing, Evans' ship enters the harbor and makes mincemeat of the Fort (and the town fathers). But Blood's emplacements are downwind. Evans himself (smart fellow!) has come overland and arrives at Blood's camp in time to see his ship stick and come to rest on the sunken carcass of Blood's ship. The men open fire, and make short work of the rebel pirates.

Our climax fight pits the cowardly Evans (who runs at the sight of his ship in flames) against Blood who runs him down on the still burning battlements of the Fort. Rapier vs. rapier style here, although they use the weapons much like cutlasses. Evans pulls the inevitable surprise dagger, narrowly missing Blood's face. After some quick play, Evans is disarmed, picks up a burning torch, and just as he's about to konk Blood for good, loses his balance, and tumbles into the Caribbean...fade out...

Fade in. Time has passed, Blood's just married Elizabeth, music swells, they ride off and we presume they live happily ever after, their honor restored. This abrupt end is almost a slap in the face.

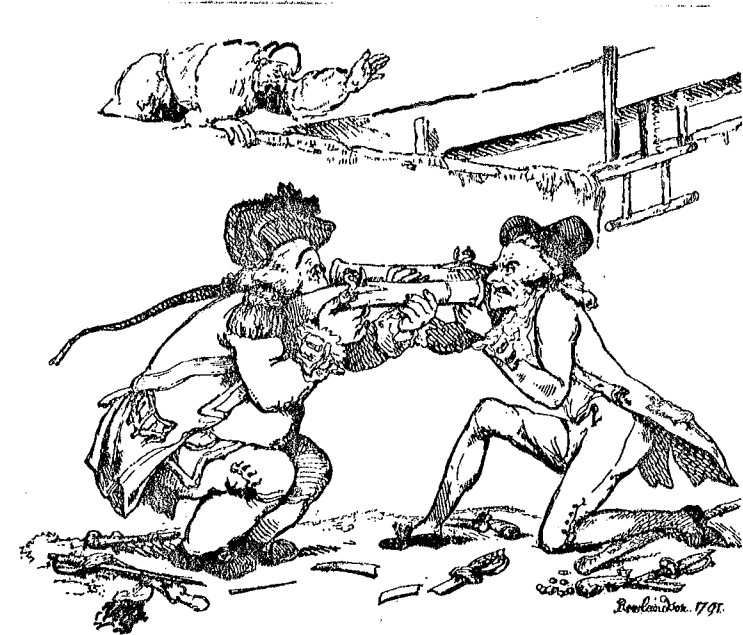
But who choreographed? Director Ralph Murphy? No one is credited for it, so we must assume what we will. Sabatini's story is told well here thanks to good action stuff, and despite predictable dialogue. Louis Hayward as Blood is not as romantic, nor as good an actor as young Flynn, but his combat skills pull him through an otherwise lumpy script. On a four-star rating, "CAPTAIN PIRATE" rates....

Movie: **½

Fights: ***

Review by:

Martel de Fer



THE COMPROMISE THEORY OF STAGE COMBAT

By Hollis Huston

There is a widespread belief that acting and stage fighting are essentially different. According to that theory, an actor stops "believing" when he starts to fight. If he really believes he is striking his partner in the face, he is likely to lose control and hurt somebody. The combatant keeps his actor's instinct on a short leash, because a fight scene compromises between the opposites of spontaneity and calculation. I will call this idea the Compromise Theory of Stage Combat.

The Compromise Theory is the very worst kind of public relations for our profession. When we say that acting and stage fighting are essentially different, we renounce the intimate relationship of our work to actor training. If we allow acting teachers to classify our work as an unrelated accessory skill like singing, dancing, or juggling, we will find a mere handful of the most professionally oriented programs investing in us. If we expect our work to find its place in the liberal arts programs, or in the impoverished smaller training programs, we must plug into the core curriculum of acting.

By selling our skill as a mere professional accessory, we also reduce our own standing in the eyes of students who do not expect to get employment from their fighting abilities. Those students are drawing false conclusions, but we may be helping them to do so. A young actress may not be appeased for long by the prospect that she might one day play Joan of Arc, when other acting exercises compete for her attention that she knows she will use every time she steps on the stage.

Fortunately, the Compromise Theory is false. It is a poor description of stage combat as we experience it. And it is an obsolete description of acting. The difference between acting and fighting is supposed to consist in this: That while the actor believes, the combatant deceives. Actors "live the part" so that they can "become" the character. Combatants simulate a part so they can create a safe illusion of character.

The distinction rests on a peculiarly American misinterpretation of Stanislavski, namely, the idea that acting is believing. Like the social-realistic drama for which it was created, that theory is now a period piece. "Belief" is much too simple a word to describe what the actor does. Meyerhold and Grotowski, Saint-Denis and Lecoq, Linklater and Lessac, have shown us how far from literal truth the actor must sometimes go in order to find artistic truth. The actor

says to himself not "I am" but "What if?" Acting is not believing, but seeming to believe.

Actors and combatants are both, in fact, in the illusion business. It is easy to understand that a staged fight is an illusion--we cannot really beat, punch, stab and kill our artists. But we were told for a long time that acting is reality, that the actor comes to think he is another person, and that his job is to draw us into the same delusion. If we buy this bill of goods, we will come to think that acting and fighting on the stage are quite different things.

Acting is not a bullfight. We do not go to the theatre to see real death and destruction. In Oedipus the King, we do not expect to see a man experience guilt, any more than we expect to see his eyes put out. What we do demand, in return for our time and money, is a powerful illusion of guilt and mutilation. Everyone in the theatre knows at every moment that the events of the play are not real. Drama depends on the knowledge of illusion. If the play is taken for reality, the performance is over at that moment.

Why, then, do we often insist that good acting is "real"? Perhaps because we fear the connotations of a word like "illusion." The idea of an illusion seems somehow false, and it also seems cold and calculating. Yet combat teaches us that what is calculated need not be cold; the actions of a fight, though calculated and rehearsed to a split second and a fraction of an inch, are emotionally and viscerally exciting. If that were not so, how many of us would be in the field?

Acting also is an illusion, but it is not cold. One cannot act coldly, any more than one can dance, or write a poem, or score a touch-down coldly; but the warmth of good acting is the warmth of an illusion. The illusion of an emotion is as complete a psychophysical experience as the emotion itself; the difference is that it is not really happening. The actor, with all of his mind, his voice, and his body, says "What if?"; the audience says "Yes, that would really be something, wouldn't it?"

If acting is the imitation of an action, stage combat is the imitation of a violent action. Combat is not a different thing, then, but only a special case of acting. It is unusual in that there is some physical danger for the actors; but actors are always in emotional danger, and our bodies respond in the same way to both. If the combatant asks "Will I injure myself?", the actor asks "Will I look like an ass?" Physiology knows no difference. In learning to cope with physical danger, the actor also learns to use the stress of emotional danger positively. Combat has no tolerance for panic; but then, neither does acting, and few exercises teach that lesson as well as a combat

CERTIFICATION

scene. Simple fight scenes, therefore, can be one of the actor's first lessons in courage.

Combat also teaches valuable lessons about ensemble. There can be no individual truth in a fight scene; safety and illusion demand that all the actors know each other's thoughts, rhythms, and preferences, and react each moment to the condition of their partners. If only all acting had the precision, the accuracy, the ensemble of a good fight scene, the theatre would be a more exciting place.

When we speak of stage combat as something different from acting, and when we teach it only as a set of skills, we undercut our own business, and talk ourselves out of jobs. There is another way to approach the subject, for combat deserves a place at the foundation of actor training, and it is up to us to provide the exercises that will integrate our work with acting.



The most recent SAFD Certification test was administered at Carnegie-Mellon U. at the end of the second week of February. I was very impressed by the spirit and enthusiasm apparent in the work--almost everyone taking the test was also involved in the mainstage production of "Twelfth Night"--indeed, the test had to be administered early Saturday morning to facilitate the afternoon matinee.

There were a number of well-executed and creative fight scenes. Some of the most notable examples were a very funny "In Training," "R.O.T.C.", the "Mattel Toy Fight" with Victor Stein and Eddie King, which displayed a great deal of creativity in movement rhythm and excellent mastery of Stage Violence techniques. Lori Herbison and Karl Stump did a hilarious take off on "Love Story" and an at time erotically delicious "Girl Scout" fight entitled "The Cookie Crumbles" was performed by Pam Putch and Pam Cornish.

The following is a list of the people who passed the test and their numbers in the SAFD Registry:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 101. Alex Beresnovitz (recommended) | 108. Pam Putch |
| 102. Jon Wool (Recommended) | 109. Eric Grosshans |
| 103. Chris O'Connor | 110. Phil Safely |
| 104. Fred Tietz | 111. Joe Sircusa |
| 105. Victor Stein (recommended) | 112. Lori Herbison |
| 106. Eddie King (recommended) | 113. Karl Stump |
| 107. Pamela Cornish | |

A total of 16 performers took the test, 13 passed, 4 were recommended. My thanks and congratulations to Mr. Patrick Crean, who did a wonderful job in a short period of time. Examiner--Erik Fredricksen

Also certified were 4 candidates out of the University of Indiana. Adjudicator Joseph Martinez had the following comments:

I adjudicated a fight test at Indiana University in Bloomington, Indiana. Four students of Micheal Sokoloff's were certified:

Bruce Longworth	Rebecca Geible
Suzanne Mills	Monica Gandy

The solid quality of the combatants is yet further proof of the fine work that the members of the Society continue to do. Michael Sokoloff should be commended for his continuing efforts in sharing the skills he has obtained from attending the National Stage Combat Training Program.

Examiner--Joseph Martinez

Recently I adjudicated the candidates from the professional acting program at the University of Washington. This took place on April 11 and was a smashing success. Eight candidates took the test and all passed with flying colors. Two were recommended for their excellence. These were some of the finest fights I have witnessed to date. What I especially liked were the themes portrayed. All of the fights were extremely well thought out and ACTED! They all presented different themes: A Musketeer theme with a candidate trying to join the Musketeers and having to prove his worth; a trial by combat in the traditional sense with all the protocol. A power struggle to establish true leadership and a marvelous combination of traditional and exotic weaponry involving a substantial amount of the martial arts.

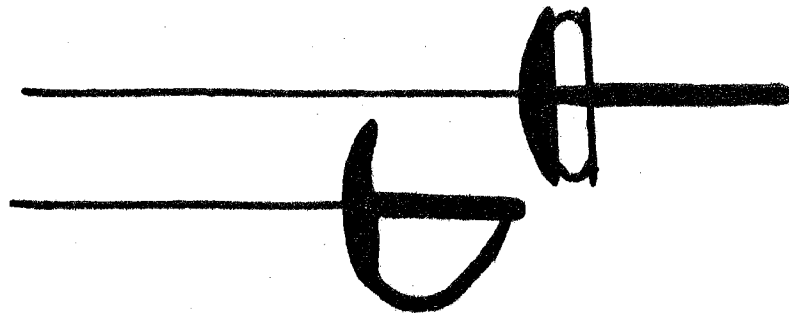
The fight work was extremely safe yet totally convincing -- that marvelous combination of total realism with total safety. I have nothing but the highest regards for these combatants and their instructor Craig Turner.

The following candidates will be entered on the Society's roster for candidates who have successfully passed the required test of skills in armed and unarmed combat.

John Cagan
Michael A. Gregory
Todd Cohen
Bill O'Leary

Kyle MacLachlan
Clayton B. Richardson
David O. Harum (Recommended)
Anthony Soper (Recommended)

Examiner--David L. Boushey



FROM THE PRESIDENT

This is just a reminder to our growing membership that we trust you will continue your association with the SAFD. Interest in this area of theatre is growing and, with the help of several of you, so is our image as a serious organization interested in the safety and creative standards of this area of the "business."

Please understand that since our officers are composed of working members of the SAFD, we simply don't have the time and facilities to send personal notices to those of you who have not paid dues for the coming year. Because we are also attempting to keep a modicum of professional standards in the quality of our membership, we are not generating the revenue which would enable us to hire a full-time secretary who does nothing but type letters and notices. By doing this, we are having to ask that your continued interest and support in the Society suffice while we continue to emerge as a quality body of interested teachers, students, and practitioners of stage combat.

A second reminder...you have approximately one month to register for the National Stage Combat Workshop this summer on the campus of beautiful Ann Arbor. I assume the entire membership has received a brochure--the latest membership roster was submitted to the Professional Training Program and the Theatre of Department of the University of Michigan for mailing.

This summer will feature Mr. Patrick Crean, whom we especially hope to utilize during the last week of the workshop to advise and critique choreography by some of the individuals who are interested in moving more strongly into this area and would like the practiced eye and experienced tutelage of the "Dean" of the Fight Game. It promises to be very exciting and rewarding; I don't want any of our membership to be denied one of the 40 spots due to late registration. I'll look forward to meeting many of you this summer.

Erik Fredricksen, President
Director, 2nd Annual SAFD
National Training Program

ANNUAL DUES

There are still a number of members who have yet to pay their annual dues. The Society cannot function without the necessary capital to cover its operation costs. The magazine alone accounts for 80% of the money collected from the membership. Please make the effort to support your Society. If members have not paid their dues by June 1, the Society will have to assume that they are no longer interested in being members of the Society, and will be removed from the Society's roster. This reminder will be the last notice regarding delinquent dues. I think the membership can see for themselves what a quality magazine the Society is now producing. We are only able to do so with the help of our colleagues both financially, and with their articles.

The following members have not yet paid their dues according to our records. If you have paid in the past two weeks, ignore the presence of your name. If you paid earlier than that time, please notify the Society and enclose a copy of your cancelled check so we can give you proper credit. Those colleagues in arrears are:

Aoyama, Kay	Hood, Michael	Reith, William
Beard-Witherup, Mark	Huston, Hollis	Robinson, James
Beardsley, J.R.	Jennings, Byron	Robinson, Milton
Bellah, George	Katz, Dr. Albert	Sloan, Gary
Campbell, Samuel	Lancaster, David	Smith, Dawson
DeLong, Kim	Leong, David	Sokoloff, Michael
Eagle, Tabitha	Martin, Jennifer	Taylor, Mark
Eves, David	Matthews, Ramon	Thackaberry, John
Giffen, Peter	Morabito, Gary	Towsen, John
Goss, Peggy	Nicklin, Scott	Uhler, Erick
Gradkowski, Richard	Osborne, Michael	Van Dyke, Leon

As you can see, the number of members delinquent are substantial. Please pay your dues and remember that if you joined the SAFD after July 1, 1980, you owe 1/2 dues.

Full Members	- \$15.00
Affiliate	- \$15.00
Actor/Com.	- \$12.00
Students	- \$12.00

David L. Boushey
Secretary-Treasurer
S.A.F.D.

"POINTS" OF INTEREST

The SAFD welcomes the following new members to the Society. We hope that they will become viable, contributing members to our common cause.

Hall, Robert (Affiliate)	550 Burnside Ave., No. A-6 East Hartford CT 06108
Richardson, Clayton (Actor/ Combatant)	606 N. 35th., No. 3 Seattle WA 98103
Tibbits, Lois (Actor/Combatant)	321 W. 94th St., No. 2N.E. New York NY 10026
Wood, Robin (Actor/Combatant)	345 E. 5th St. New York NY 10003

The Society wishes to make the following corrections to its last issue (No. 12) of The Fight Master.

Allen Suddeth is a Full Member of the Society and not an Affiliate.
Rick Duet is an Affiliate member of the Society and not a student.
Drew Dracher is an Actor/Combatant of the Society and not a student.
Patrick Crean's address is: 18 Duke Street, Stratford, Ontario,
Canada

Members: Please notify the Society of any errors regarding your status or any other questionable area that you wish to address. Also, it is of the utmost importance that you give the Society any changes in your address so we can keep our mailing list up to date.

The following article appeared in the New York magazine The Dial regarding a recently reviewed production of the B.B.C.'s Hamlet that appeared in our magazine. It reads as follows:

FOILED

What could easily have been the greatest Hamlet ever was totally destroyed in the last ten minutes by that ludicrous slapstick duel.

Whose insane idea was it, and why didn't Derek Jacobi object? Surely they could have spent an hour or two learning the fundamentals of swordplay?

Mind you, I'm not asking that they fence as well as Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone, but this slipping, sliding travesty resembled two ducks learning to roller-skate!

And turning their backs on each other again and again?
 Since when does one slash with a foil as if it were a
 cavalry saber?

Aside from that, the play was truly magnificent. But, oh,
 what a helicopter-sized fly in the ointment!

John H. Cone
 Pasadena, California

The people who put the magazine together for the SAFD are very
 pleased with the response for this issue. A number of very interesting
 articles were offered to the membership. This is the kind of response
 that will make this magazine invaluable to the membership. Please don't
 stop now! Let's hear from some of you who have yet to submit an
 article. Keep in mind that come July, another issue must be ready for
 the press. This issue has to be the most complete and informative that
 we have published to date.

The Society of American Fight Directors continues to boycott
 Castello's Fencing Equipment due to their non-payment of advertising
 space. We strongly recommend that no member of the SAFD support
 Castello's in any way until they have paid their advertising fee.

J. R. Beardsly wishes to compile a listing of all known fight
 scenes taking place in dramatic literature. He intends to publish a
 list in The Fight Master to better enable fellow members to find
 various fight scenes for class work or other performance possibilities.
 You can send various fight scenes to him at: 1380 Reliez Valley Road,
 Lafayette, California

He is especially interested in fight scenes that are not common knowledge.
 Obscure pieces rarely read or performed would be especially well
 received.

J. R. BEARDSLEY (Affiliate) recently choreographed Romeo & Juliet for
 the Western Opera Company out of San Francisco, and will be remounting
 the same fights with a new cast for the Spring Opera to open soon at the
 Curran Theatre (San Francisco). He has been asked to conduct a fight
 workshop for the Aspen, Colorado Opera this summer. He is presently
 teaching combat to the students at the Berkeley Drama Studio (affiliate
 of the London Drama Studio). Also, he is working on a comedy routine
 he hopes to tour with a colleague entitled "The Fox and Weirdsley."

DAVID L. BOUSHEY recently choreographed Macbeth for the Los Angeles
 Actors Theatre, The Rivals for the San Francisco A.C.T., and Henry IV,
 for the Walnut Creek Repertory Theatre. He completed his work at
 California State, Los Angeles, and will soon be going on his annual
 Shakespeare choreography tour beginning with Macbeth and Cymbeline
 at the California Shakespeare Festival.

ROD COLBIN recently choreographed the duel for the T.V. series Mork and
 Mindy. He is acting full time on T.V. and in feature films. He is also
 pursuing his teaching of combat at his studio in L.A.

ROY WILLIAM COX (Affiliate) recently trained the combatants for the
 Medieval Faire in Sarasota, Florida. He will soon be touring with
 "The Flying Karamazov Brothers" as a trainer (fight director on their
 European Tour to London, Dublin and elsewhere.

RICK DUET (Affiliate) just completed doing a role at the Center Stage
 (Baltimore) in A Man for All Seasons.

STACY EDDY (Affiliate) has a new address: 705 Ivy Street, No. 5,
 Pittsburg, PA 15232

DREW FRACHER (Actor/Combatant) has a new address: 525 Cherry Ave.,
 No. 4, Waynesboro, VA 22980

ERIK FREDRICKSEN is currently teaching a full theatre load at the
 University of Michigan (M.F.A. program) through the remainder of this
 academic year.

WILLIAM HAUSERMAN (Affiliate) has a new address: 429 W. Idaho Ave.,
 No. 33, St. Paul, MN 55117

JOSEPH MARTINEZ recently adjudicated a fight test at Indiana University
 in Bloomington. He recently conducted workshops in Combat Mime at the
 Illinois Theatre Festival in Champagne/Urbana, Illinois, and at the
 Southeastern Theatre Conference Convention in Orlando, Florida.

CHRIS PHILLIPS (Affiliate) is working as the Production Assistant with
 Chicago Scenic Studios in Chicago. He has a new address:

1201 W. Wrightwood, Chicago, IL 60614

GARY SLOAN (Affiliate) recently played Tybolt in Romeo & Juliet for the Long Wharf Theatre.

JEROME SMITH (Affiliate) recently finished choreographing the combats for a New England Repertory Theatre production of Othello and is now in production with Richard III for the Boston Shakespeare Company where he has been made resident fight director. He is also preparing combats with his troupe Swordplay which will be performing at the New England Renaissance Festival this summer. He continues to teach at the Boston Center for the Arts and at the Actors Workshop of Boston.

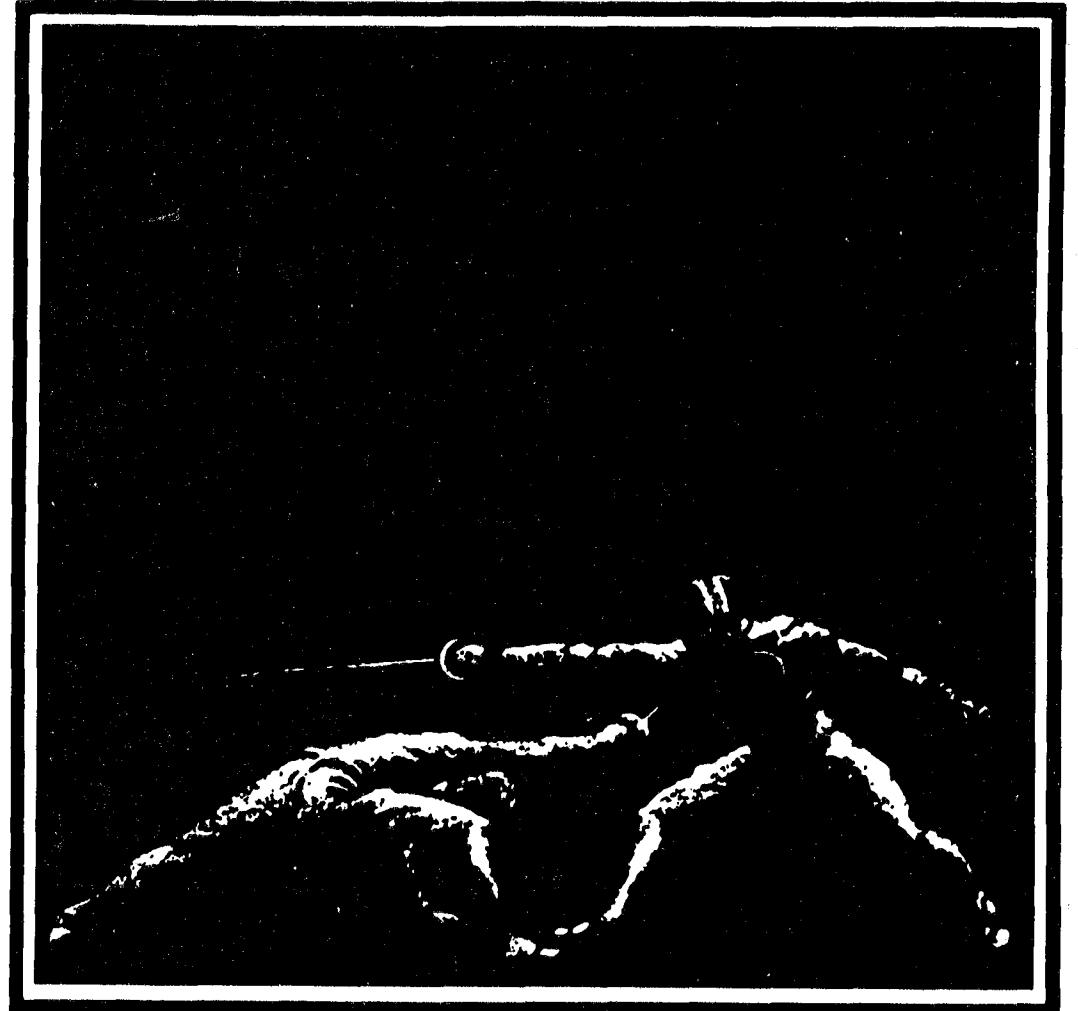
ALLEN SUDETH is teaching roughly 40 students at his studio in New York. He recently finished choreographing Robin Hood at the Riverside Church. He is scheduled to "act in" and choreograph the fight scenes in an independent film, The Cavalier, this spring.

CRAIG TURNER (Affiliate) recently choreographed a fight sequence for the Seattle Repertory Theatre's production of 23 Years Later. He will also be teaching stage combat for the California Shakespearean Festival in the Conservatory this summer as well as a workshop in martial arts techniques for actor training at the American Movement Institute, St. Louis, in July.

CHRIS VILLA (Affiliate) recently choreographed the fights in Vagabond King for the Diabolo Light Opera Company near San Francisco. He also completed his own show at Humboldt State University, where he teaches combat, entitled An Evening of Stage Combat. He has a new address: 1223 Devlin Court, Arcata, CA 98521

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