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The Cutting Edge

The Society of American Fight Directors

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## **The Cutting Edge, November/December 1993, Vol. 4 Issue 5**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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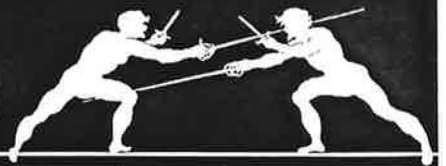
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# The Cutting Edge

Newsletter for the Society of American Fight Directors

Volume IV, Number 5 Nov./Dec. 1993



## PERSONAL LIABILITY

After much work by several members, we are pleased to announce a relationship with Ms. Cheech Bradford, who is an insurance broker and combatant in Los Angeles.

Personal Liability insurance policies are now available to members who, whether fighting, teaching or staging fights, might have a need for personal coverage.

Ms. Bradford suggests that each of us should be covered by the producers or institutions that are hiring us and that we should all make sure that this is, indeed, the case. If, however, anyone is interested in more coverage, contact:

Cheech Bradford  
Disc Insurance Services, Inc.  
3500 West Olive Ave.  
Suite 1180  
Burbank CA 91505-4628  
(818) 973-4525

## WANTED : ACTOR/COMBATANTS

West Virginia State Musical Theatre needs actors, actor combatants, director, dance choreographer and T.D.

Joel Mason will be directing fight scenes. Send resumes to:

Joel Mason  
Soldiers Memorial Theatre  
200 S. Kanawha St  
Beckley, WV 25801

## HELP!

Michael Kirkland is working on a list of "how to" video tapes on western (non-oriental) styles of combat. Fencing, boxing etc.

Send info to:

Michael Kirkland  
Galveston College  
Upper Deck Theatre  
5001 Ave U  
Galveston, TX 77550

## SAFD & Equity re: extraordinary risk

A report from SAFD President Drew Fracher

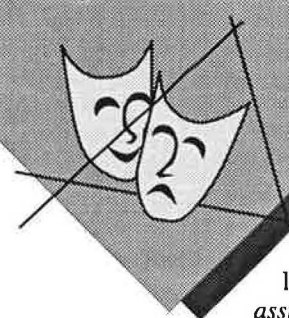
THANKS TO THE GROUND WORK OF Certified Teacher David Woolley, I had a very informative meeting with Mr. Tad Currie, Regional Director of the central region of Actor's Equity Association. We discussed many issues, among them the wording of the current contracts regarding fight directors, fight captains and fight calls. Mr. Currie is clearly an ally of the fight director and in turn, the SAFD and had much input that was of interest to us all. In particular, I wanted to pass along information regarding "Extraordinary Risk" rider of said contracts.

### Extraordinary risk

First of all, just about anything that we do in terms of performing stage combat of any sort or description is, and should be considered, extraordinary risk. From the most basic slap to the most complex sword-play, anything that one might potentially be injured in performing falls under this heading — even scenery that is out of the ordinary, such as raked platforms, steep stairs without railings etc.

There is much gray area and it is up to the management, the equity deputy, the fight director, and the performer to ascertain if required movement involves extraordinary

# EQUITY



risk or no. Once this is established (do not assume that it is)

then the performer

should sign an extraordinary risk rider.

One of the major problems with this concept is that in many of the contracts now used by AEA, extraordinary risk requires that the actor be paid an additional sum of money (usually \$10-\$20 per week). This naturally, makes management pale and thus much of the time the rider is "overlooked" and the actor doesn't even have the opportunity presented.

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## Raising Fight Test Standards

by David Boushey

IN THE PAST THREE MONTHS I have had the opportunity to adjudicate seven Skills Proficiency Tests across the country. It has come to my attention that there are some important factors that we who teach and submit our students for adjudication should consider. I am finding that students are not as well prepared as they should be when performing their fights and the overall effectiveness of their work is often sub-standard.

We all agree that safety is paramount! We emphasize safety throughout our teaching process. We tell our students horror stories about fights gone awry and law suits that have followed. What I am finding is a focus on safety that is so apparent that any emphasis on acting the

fight and selling the fight is taking a back seat. It is not that I don't believe in safety, but I also emphasize realism when teaching my students. I want a sense of danger! I want the audience or adjudicator on the edge of their seats! This is supposed to be a violent confrontation we are portraying and if it all looks very comfortable and non-threatening, then I feel we have dropped the bottom out of what is supposed to be the climax of all that has gone before by way of plot development. What I am finding in many tests is a lack of tempo. I cannot accept a couple fighting at half speed appearing to be very safe while the acting of the piece and the illusion of danger is no where to be found. It is not

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# Profile

CERTIFIED TEACHER

## DAVID DOERSCH

The year was 1982. David Doersch was a cadet at West Point looking to do anything to escape some of his military duties. He stumbled on the Theatre Arts Guild, and auditioned for their production of *The Three Musketeers*. He was lucky enough to get in the role of those. The military contracted Normand Beauregard, then a Fight Master of the SAFD, to come and choreograph the play's violence. This was David's first introduction to stage combat, and he was smitten. He had found his calling. Shortly thereafter, he resigned his commission in the United States Army and began to pursue a life in the theatre, and more specifically, stage combat.

Having a strong background in martial arts and boxing, David had many of the necessary physical tools to continue work in this field, but it was to be several years before he was able to attain any additional serious training in stage combat. That time came in 1988, after serving as fight captain for David Leong at the Guthrie Theatre, Leong had suggested that David attend the National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis. There, under the tutelage of J. Allen Suddeth, Drew Fracher, David Boushey, Erik Fredricksen and David Leong, David was introduced to the SAFD properly and he began his real training.

*"Joining the Society and attending the workshop changed my life."*

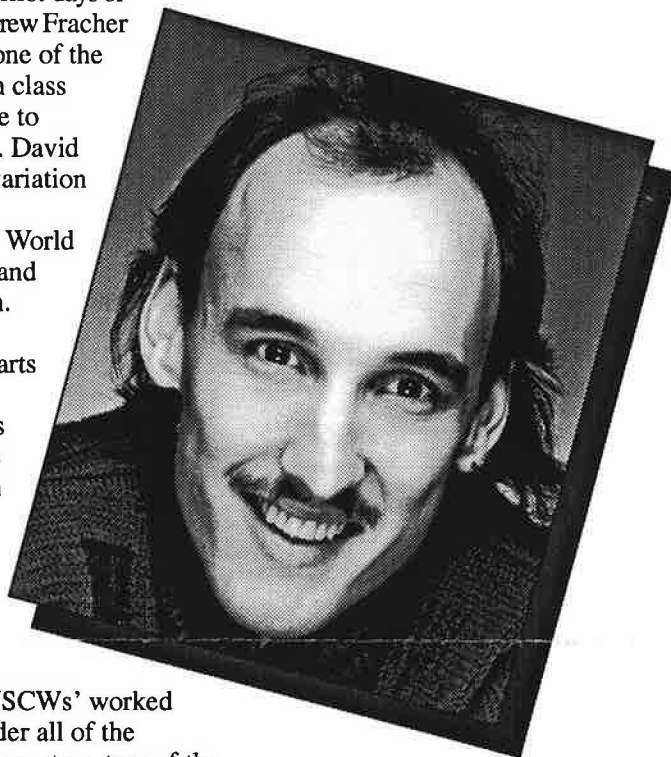
"Joining the Society and attending the workshop changed my life. I cannot express my gratitude to the gentlemen who have and continue to train me".

During the first days of that workshop, Drew Fracher requested that one of the many Davids in class take a nickname to simplify things. David chose a slight variation on his father's nickname from World War II, "Pop", and Pops" was born.

Having a formal martial arts and military background has served to shape Pops' approach to studying stage combat. Having a decidedly "gung-ho" attitude, he has attended five NSCWs' worked and learned under all of the American fight masters, two of the British fight masters and recently worked with Paddy Crean at the workshop in Washington D.C. These influences have shaped Pops' style, and continue to do so. "I'll always be a student of this art form... the day I stop learning is the day I die. Each master has such a unique approach, and different emphasis from the others that it is absolutely fascinating to work with each of

them. I am also very impressed with the certified teachers...there's an awful lot of exciting work being done out there, all over!"

In the fall of 1990, Pops banded together with his three most advanced students, Jim "Stubby" Chlebeczek, Erin P. Kenny and Joe Manussier and founded the



Minnesota Academy of Stage Combat Skills (MASCS).

"These are some extraordinary people, each with a great future in the Society." MASCS, a center for artistic development in stage combat and related arts, has successfully tested over 100 students as actor combatants and continues to offer classes, workshops, choreography, etc.

In 1991 Pops received his Teacher Certification from the SAFD. "One of the proudest moments of my life," he stated. In 1993, he was made a Regional Rep

Somehow he and his wife Elizabeth Wiley, are finding time to start a family. "Liz and I decided to make this 'Pops' thing real,"

# Test Standards

-Continued from Page 1

enough to perform all required moves  
fely. I want to be pulled into the fight  
like any audience member. I do not  
want excuses that justify mediocrity.

If you haven't worked long enough,  
that is your problem. If you as a teacher  
have not given your students enough  
time to rehearse their fights then you  
should find more time or re-structure  
your lesson plan. (Remember: the SAFD  
requires a minimum 80 hours instruc-  
tion prior to testing). Expecting an  
adjudicator to pass people because they  
"tried hard" is unacceptable. To pass  
the students because they were safe,  
and only safe, is unacceptable. I want  
to see fights that impress me with their  
performance qualities.

This is part of the American  
mentality of doing just enough to "get  
by." Doing just enough to pass the test,  
without any real concern for the art form.  
We do not do ourselves justice when  
we present students to the industry who  
do not represent what we would like  
stage combatants to be. Our credibility  
as a professional organization lies in  
the quality of work we do and the  
calibre of students we train.

What I am suggesting is that we  
raise our standards. That we insist that  
students perform their fights as if it  
were opening night. That tempo be an  
integral part of test preparation. That  
the all important safety concerns do  
not get in the way of the performance,  
but rather blend into the fight to create  
excitement on stage.



## WORKSHOP INFO.

University of Nevada, Las Vegas  
Dept. of Theatre Arts Sponsors

### Winterfest 93

Regional Stage Combat Workshop  
Canceled for this year, but get your  
reservation for 1994.

Contact Linda McCollum (702)895-3662

### Feldenkrais Method Workshop

Gaby Yaron Instructor  
Jan 28,29,30 Cincinnati, OH  
Contact Donna Lilley, PT (513) 851-5856  
Feb. 4, 5, 6 Wilmington, DE  
Carol Jo Heald, PT (215) 388-7470



This column is to keep members informed of  
movement skills workshops across the country.  
Send info. to:

The Cutting Edge  
1834 Camp Ave. • Rockford IL 61103



**Steven Levine** recently graduated  
from the Dell'Arte School of  
Physical Theatre and staged the  
violence for *Jesus Christ Superstar*  
at Ferndale Repertory Theatre.

**Michael Chin** has guest star billing  
on an upcoming episode of *Kung  
Fu; The Legend Continues* where  
he saves the world, gets the girl  
and does his own stunts.

**Richard Lane** has been kept busy  
choreographing *Carmen* at the  
Memphis Grand Opera, *Der  
Meistersinger* and *I Puritani* for  
the San Francisco Opera and the  
world premiere of *Josephine* at  
TheatreWorks

**Dexter Fidler** did the fights for  
Idaho Shakes' *Midsummer..* and  
*Comedy of Errors* and *Robin  
Hood* for Chico's Shakespeare  
in the Park.

**Steven Earl Edwards** Directed and  
choreographed a stunt filled *Kiss  
Me Kate*, and is asking anyone in  
the Atlanta area interested in  
forming a combat group contact  
him at (706) 812-7324

**Jim McClellan** Choreographed  
*Cyrano* for the Civic Theatre of  
Orlando, *I Hate Hamlet* for the  
Ice House and *Hamlet* at the  
Eola Theatre.

**Jack Young** recently taught stage  
combat at the Governor's School of  
South Carolina as well as  
continuing as Artistic Director of  
the Warehouse Theatre where he  
has enslaved **Mike Mahaffey** as  
journeyman. Mike played Puck in  
*Midsummer* this season and was  
head instructor of Newberry, SC's  
Gifted and Talented Program.

**Jim Chlebeczek** choreographed  
*Hamlet* at Shakespeare & Co.  
*Romeo and Juliet* at The Artists'  
Shakespeare Festival, as well as  
co-choreographing *R&J* with **Erin  
P. Kinny** at Min. Shakespeare Fest.  
and *Henry IV* with **David Doersch**  
and **Erin P. Kinny**.

**David Doersch** was the fight  
director for *Othello* at the Guthrie  
and stunt coordinator for two  
commercials which saw him  
robbing a bank and hanging  
upside down from the back of a  
moving tow truck.

**David Engel** played a principal  
role on *The Untouchables* as well  
as doing his own stunts when he  
tried to kill F.D.R. David also  
choreographed *City of Angels* at  
Drury Lane and acted as fight  
captain for *Cymbeline* at  
Chicago's Shakespeare Rep.

**Erica Bilder** staged the fights for  
*The Taming of the Shrew* at the  
North Country Center for the Arts.

**Willis Middleton** did triple duty as  
combatant, choreographer and  
teacher at the new Poconos  
Renaissance Faire.

**Richard Raether**, in addition to  
being associate director of the  
New American Theater where he  
directed *Harvey* and *A Christmas  
Carol* this fall, also taught at U.W.  
Milwaukee, and U.W. Madison,  
staged the fights for *Cymbeline*,  
*American Buffalo*, and *Taming of  
the Shrew*. In his spare time, he  
and **Margaret** produced the *Fight  
Master* and this newsletter.  
Apologies to all those attempting  
to do business or get information  
from him these past two months.



## SAFD & Equity

-Continued from Page 1

### Ineligible for coverage

The problem is that if you are hurt and you have not signed the rider, you might not be eligible for complete coverage by workman's comp and AEA insurance. Partial coverage will be provided, but the rider insures that you receive full benefits until your contract is complete or you are able to work again. The rider simply says that everyone involved has acknowledged the risk you are taking and that the union will cover you completely if you should by chance be injured.

### Getting management to agree

In the Central Region, they have made this procedure much more palatable to management by taking out the clause stating that the actor will be given extra pay. Since there is no money from theatre to actor, the

managers have no problem with individuals signing the rider and thus gaining complete protection. Some might say that they have given away salary that an actor might have been earning. However, it is plain that the extra money is little or nothing compared to the loss of coverage resulting from not signing the rider. In essence, the Central Region has given up a few bucks to gain complete protection for the actor.

It is my hope that some members of the SAFD who are also AEA members might be interested in getting on the negotiating teams in other cities and attempt to restructure the contracts to reflect the foresight now in place in the Central Region. In any case as AEA actors it is imperative that you ask for the Extraordinary Risk rider. Protection is the overriding need as always.

My thanks to Mr. Currie for his insight and help. ♦♦♦

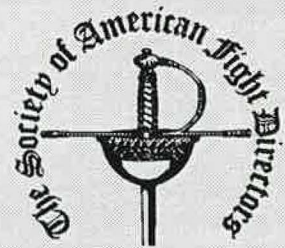
## The Cutting Edge

is concocted bimonthly by  
Margaret and Richard Raether

*The Cutting Edge*  
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Submissions should be sent to:

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1834 Camp Avenue  
Rockford, IL 61103



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