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The Society of American Fight Directors

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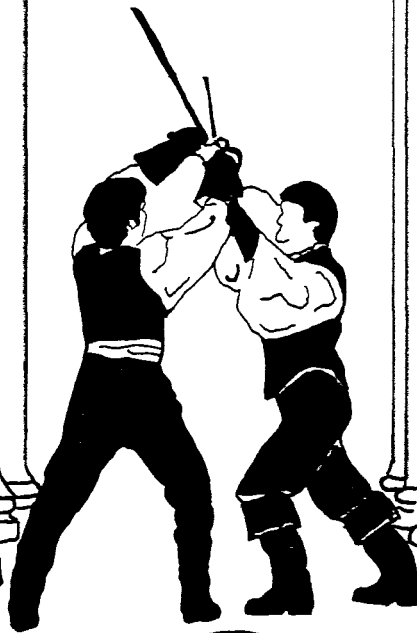
The **Fight**
MASTER

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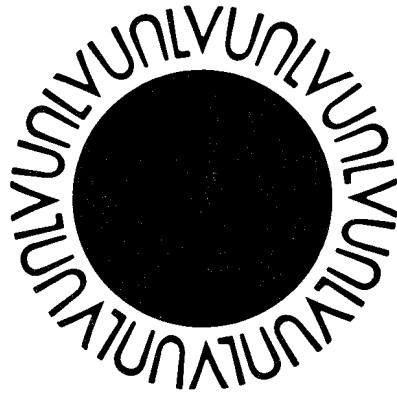
JOURNAL OF THE

SOCIETY OF
AMERICAN
FIGHT DIRECTORS

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**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS
COLLEGE OF ARTS AND LETTERS
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

The Fight MASTER

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

September 1986
Volume IX number 3

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THE FIGHT MASTER

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

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SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

President Joseph Martinez
Vice President Drew Fracher
Treasurer David Boushey
Secretary Linda McCollum

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded in May, 1977. It is a non-profit organization whose aim is to promote the art of fight choreography as an integral part of the entertainment industry. Members of the Society of American Fight Directors serve the entertainment industry by promoting the aesthetics and safety of well-conceived fight choreography.

I attended the opening of the National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis in order to meet with the Executive Committee of the Society of American Fight Directors. I was quite impressed with how well this workshop had been organized and by the charming southern hospitality that welcomed us to Memphis. It was especially helpful for me to meet some of the members of the Society who were in attendance at the Workshop and to have the opportunity to finally have a face with a name.

A lot of work was accomplished by the officers in our two days of meetings, and work was done on the By-Laws and the Policies and Procedures Manual to bring them into accord with the actual workings of the Society, all of which is pending approval by the Board of Directors and legal counsel. One of the items discovered in carefully going through the By-Laws was that the dues were to be sent to the Secretary. This dates back to the time when the Secretary and Treasurer were one position. After discussion it was decided that it would expedite procedures if the members did send their membership fees to the Secretary who maintains all the Society records. So all membership dues for 1987 should be made out to the Society of American Fight Directors and sent to Linda McCollum, P.O. Box 218, Blue Diamond, Nevada 89004. Since I am also editor, this change will centralize the Society's activities and allow us to keep our records current.

The Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas has a new chairperson, Dr. Beverley Byers-Pevitts, who has agreed to have the department continue its support of the journal along with the College of Arts and Letters. Publication of the journal will be done on a Macintosh which we are trying out for the first time with this issue. Our sincere thanks goes to the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for their continued support of **The Fight Master**.

Linda Carlyle McCollum

The Seventh Annual National Stage Combat Workshop was an enormous success, with the largest group of students and Master Teachers in its history. That success is directly attributable to the efforts of Susan Chrietzberg as local coordinator and liason between the Society and Memphis State University, who hosted this year's workshop. And of course, Mr. David Leong, National Workshop Coordinator for the Society, must be credited for his untiring and inspired work in organizing our most important event of the year. David's expertise coupled with Susan's attention to detail were an unstoppable combination, resulting in an extraordinary training experience for the students.

I flew to Memphis to welcome the NSCW participants and to chair our annual meeting of the officers of the Society. Our meeting was extremely productive and lasted into the wee hours of the morning. All of the officers were in attendance, as well as the National Workshop Coordinator. I would like to touch upon only three of the many issues voted upon at our annual meeting.

Previously, only U.S. Citizens were eligible to be members of the Society in any classification, while non-U.S. Citizens could only hold the classification of Friend. We eliminated that restriction by unanimous vote, pending approval of the Board to all classifications except Fight Master. Now, our Canadian, British and Other Friends may seek reclassification.

During the year, many of the members have voiced concerns over the designations of classifications in the Society. Although we have attempted to clarify classification, they remained confusing to members and employers alike. We discussed this issue and decided upon the following changes:

The classifications of Friend, Students and Actor/Combatant will remain the same. A Friend is a layperson who is interested in the Society, wishes to support the Society's work and to subscribe to **The Fight Master**. A Student member is a person currently enrolled in a school, who has not passed a certification test fight. Actor/Combatant is an individual who has passed the SAFD Certification Test. The title of Associate has been changed to Certified Teacher

for those who have been reviewed by the Fight Masters. And finally, the classification of Fight Master has been modified to read Certified Fight

Master. In addition to these changes, we agreed to send a letter describing these classifications to several thousand theatres and training institutions.

The last point I would like to clarify is about previous SAFD admonitions concerning the proper use of the Society's name in procuring employment. By all means, use the Society's name as often as possible in your professional life. The Society needs your word of mouth support as often as possible. However, the Society has the most stringent professional standards of any theatrical organization in the country and we are committed to maintaining those standards. Our collective reputation demands that we are able to provide consistent excellence in every encounter between our membership and those who employ our services.

There is, I think, no argument that there exist levels of expertise among our membership. The member classifications are an effort to clarify those differences in experience and ability. We cannot allow any member of the Society to falsely characterize his/her skill level in order to gain employment.

The problems in the past have come about primarily from those who have claimed that as members of the Society they are sanctioned to be Choreographers or Teachers of Stage Combat. Only Certified Fight Masters and Certified Teachers are sanctioned by the Society as being unequivocally qualified to choreograph or teach stage fighting at a professional level, i.e., for remuneration. If an employer seeks the Society's advice, we will endorse only those levels of classification for that type of work.

Now this does not mean that any member of the Society is barred from doing any kind of work that he or she wishes or is offered. Our efforts in maintaining standards under the SAFD banner is not restrictive, but rather constructive necessity for the health of the SAFD over the next decade and beyond. If a member wishes to be endorsed by the Society as a choreographer or teacher, he/she merely needs to satisfy the basic requirements outlined by the Society for the proper classification and to apply to the Vice-President. I hope I have further clarified this rather sticky question. And as I mentioned previously, we are resolved to be more aggressive in advertising in order to make our standards common knowledge and thus make these distinctions more meaningful to employers nationwide.

I would like to ask those members in good standing in the Society to remind fellow colleagues that are not receiving this issue of **The Fight Master** that due to their non payment of annual dues they can no longer receive the Society's roster. It is disappointing and frustrating to the officers of the Society when we have to take these measures especially when we know that a simple matter of forgetfulness is the culprit, but as officers we cannot continue to carry non-paying members. We hope that our delinquent colleagues will remember to pay their dues. We are instituting a new policy in 1987 which will have wide spread effect on delinquent members, but we will leave that for the January issue. We can no longer operate as a viable organization without the payment of dues at a respectable time. Dear friends and colleagues, we are a formidable part of the entertainment industry and we must behave as one. We are well established now. As founder of the Society I have seen tremendous growth across the breadth of the continent. We must pursue our professions with professional vigor and enthusiasm. This organization is on the way up and who knows where it will all end. All I know is that any person wanting to be a part of the fight game and this Society should want to pay his or her dues and feel proud to do so.

I just returned from having taught at the National Stage Combat Workshop for three weeks, and it was a marvelous experience. It was without doubt the finest National Workshop the Society has sponsored to date. The workshop went off without a hitch, the teachers were marvelous, the assistants impeccable, the administration superb and the students the most talented group of participants this teacher has ever had the good fortune to collaborate with. The workshops get stronger every year and I urge members to take the National Workshops. There is a wealth of information to be gained. I am proud to have been a part of it. I am especially proud of the Society and what it stands for and where it is going. We old war horses will be passing forth the banner some day, and I feel confident the younger members of the Society will grow to become the Society's leaders in the years to come. Don't allow yourselves to be badgered into maintaining your status in the Society--belong to the Society because you want to be a part of this segment of theatre and of all the pride and rewards that spring forth from such an honorable profession.

**VICE-PRESIDENT'S
REPORT**

My Dear Comrades,

I am hoping that each of you enjoyed a pleasant summer and that all of your theatrical endeavors have been safe and successful. Having just returned from the National Workshop I find myself once again revitalized and highly charged regarding the SAFD as an organization. The quality of the students was very high this year and I think that this is a direct reflection of our growing status and respectability in the industry. I am thrilled that as a result of the workshop we have forty seven new members and I would once again like to extend a welcome to each of them. I urge all existent members to seek out these new members and if any live in your area to make them welcome. We must as an organization begin to help each other to grow and thrive. That can only be accomplished on the most basic of levels, person to person. The fraternal nature of the organization must be nurtured if we are to survive.

While at the workshop we held an executive committee meeting and I am very hopeful that more growth and change will come as a result of that meeting. A resolution was passed charging me with developing a letter with the assistance of a marketing specialist that will describe in detail the purpose of the Society, its goals and its divisions of status within the organization. Once completed it will be sent to all professional theatres and major universities in the country. Its purpose is to show them how serious we are about our goals and what the

Society has to offer. This will be completed and in the mail by the first of the year. We need to build and reinforce our credibility and it is up to each and every one of you to do your part as well. Strive to make the Society something worth belonging to and working for.

Finally, to the Associates. I am still hoping to hear from a large number of you regarding your position in the Society and what you would like to see in terms of growth and change. Only through you who are out there teaching and choreographing every day can we, the Officers, get an idea of how the organization is working in practice. Help me out and take a few moments to write me if you haven't already. I NEED to hear from you!! Forgive me if I have not yet responded to those of you that have written; once all the information is in and I have been able to make some sense of all the input I assure you that I will be in touch. In the meantime feel free to get in touch with me if I can do ANYTHING for you. That goes for the entire membership. Contact me, I want desperately to hear from all of you.

In closing let me urge you all to strive for excellence in the name of our SAFD. Things are happening for us as a whole and I urge you to take an active part in our growth and development. Fight safely and above all ENJOY!!

Your most obedient,
Drew Fracher

<p>Initial membership in the SAFD is \$25. Dues for Fight Masters, Certified Teachers, Recognized Actor/Combatants, Associates, Affiliates and Friends are \$25 annually. All membership dues are to be paid in January to the Secretary, Linda McCollum, P.O. Box 218, Blue Diamond, Nevada 89004.</p>	<p>Inquires concerning new memberships, status or change of address should be addressed to the secretary, Linda McCollum, P.O. Box 218, Blue Diamond, Nevada 89004.</p>	<p>Application for change in status within the Society should be addressed to Drew Fracher, c/o Abiding Grace Fams, 780 Bushtown Road, Harrodsburg, KY 40330</p>	<p>Articles for consideration in <i>The Fight Master</i> should be submitted to the editor, Linda McCollum, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Nevada, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada 89154.</p>
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A MODERN SWORDSMITH OF TOLEDO

by Richard J. Gradkowski

On the outskirts of Toledo, in a landscape that would have been familiar to El Greco, is a small building where dedicated craftsmen continue the art of swordsmithing. In this simple one-story structure are produced replicas of historic swords. These are real swords, not the embellished gewgaws of the tourist trade. A sixteenth century swordsman (or one from any other century for that matter) could simply pick one up, sharpen it to his liking, and go out and fight. The proprietor and guiding spirit of this enterprise is a Serbian nobleman, Oscar Kolombatovich.

In his career as an armorer and swordmaker, the Maestro has made thousands of weapons. A recent example of his outstanding work was a presentation sabre made for His Majesty Juan Carlos, the King of Spain. In 1984 the Madrid Council of the Navy League of the United States authorized Kolombatovich to design and construct this weapon to honor his Majesty.

Kolombatovich is uniquely suited for this occupation. a Fencing Master (now Emeritus) and a historian of swordplay and arms, he brings to his craft a personal and working knowledge of the combat methods particular to each of the many different weapons he makes. While not neglecting the artistic aspect of these often beautiful implements, he is directly concerned with their use and function. Before he constructs a weapon he must answer the questions: How was it used? How much did it weigh and how was it balanced? How was it carried and drawn into action? How did it feel? Thus, his products are as close to the real thing as one can get nowadays.

Historical research plays an important part in his designs. Kolombatovich usually begins a project by a careful examination of an existing sword in a museum. After a viewing and often a discussion with the curator he makes detailed drawings, with accurate measurements. The project is then broken up into its various components (the fabrication of the blade, hilt, handle, decoration) and the rough finished parts are then processed through grinding, chasing, etching, and gilding, as needed. The requirement for a high level of craftsmanship has forced Kolombatovich to become adept at metallurgy, casting and all machine processes.

His years of practical experience as a competitive fencer and teacher of fencing are reflected in the high standards he demands of his work. All blades are of high quality forged and tempered steel with the tang integral and cusped into the quillon block (to prevent breaking or turning). The handles themselves are burned onto the red hot tang to form an exact and immovable fit.

Formerly Fencing Master at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point and at the Salle Santelli in New York, Kolombatovich has also had extensive experience as a choreographer, having worked at the Metropolitan Opera for many years. Recently, he choreographed an extravaganza for Placido Domingo in the Teatro de la Zarzuela in Madrid. This background has given him some definite ideas on stage weaponry.

Kolombatovich especially hates the "all-wrong, all-purpose, cup hilt with epee blade" which too often finds itself in an actor's hands. He feels that it is impossible to project the true feeling of swordsmanship with

such an illogical implement. In his words: "swordplay need not be pretty or flashy to be dramatic." His interest in theatrical weaponry has led him to create several special swords for the stage or operatic combatant. One useful model is the "Sextet," which can be altered to form six styles from the medieval to the late seventeenth century by adding appropriate elements to the hilt with an ordinary screwdriver. He has also perfected a sword blade which, while combat worthy, can, at the correct moment, break in half.

Since his "retirement" to Spain twelve years ago, Kolombatovich has expanded his collection to include almost all weapons from pre-historic to modern sword canes. The firm's tiny showroom near the Royal Palace in Madrid is a veritable museum, the walls covered with authentic weaponry, the shelves and files full of texts and plates of arms and armor. For the student of the history of swordsmanship, the shop and its proprietor are a delight to visit.



The Maestro in the Madrid showroom, with rapier and parrying dagger.

TO CUT OR THRUST?

by Linda McCollum

As late as 1599 the Englishman George Silver in the *Paradoxes of Defence* was still expressing a preference for the traditional English sword over the rapier and the technique of cutting over the practice of thrusting in the Italian style. The rapier had been in England for half a century having been introduced by the court of Phillip II during his stay in England as Mary Tudor's husband or even earlier by Spanish mercenaries serving under Henry VIII, and the Spanish term *rapier* was part of the English language by 1560. The Spanish style of swordplay with its emphasis on ritual and the metaphysical was gradually supplanted by the Italian style with its emphasis on technique. The educated Englishman recognized the advantages of the new style but the general English populace was unwilling to accept the Italian fencing style which emphasized the supremacy of the point.

There is no question of the superiority of the thrust over the cut since the point has the advantage of time and distance over the edge. As early as the fourth century the Roman writer Flavius Vegetius Renuus in *Epitoma re militari* pointed out that the right arm and flank were exposed when cutting, while during a thrust the body was guarded and the adversary was wounded before he perceived the attack. The virtue of the point over the edge was apparently lost during the Middle Ages but was rediscovered in the Renaissance.

There are several plausible explanations for the English reluctance to accept the practice of thrusting with the point of the sword.

The English populace was well known on the Continent for its dislike and distrust of anything foreign and for its opposition to innovation or change. The animosity and resentment felt by the English at the success of foreigners in their country often spilled over into acts of violence against the aliens. No foreigner dared to travel without a royal passport to insure his safety. And the English were especially suspicious of anyone or anything coming from a Catholic nation. The migration of "fencing masters" into England proved to be especially irksome to the English fencing masters who had held a monopoly on the teaching of arms since the incorporation of the Masters of the Noble Science of Defence in 1540 by Henry VIII.

Since the invention of firearms noblemen were no longer able to rely on the safety of armor in battle and had turned to the sword as a secondary weapon of defense and offense over the armor-cracking weapons of the mace, flair, and axe. Schools which taught the art of fighting with weapons on foot arose from the middle classes and traditions and skills were handed down through generations of fighting guilds. Men of all classes who wished to acquire proficiency in the use of arms found it necessary to resort to some school of fencing and to take lessons in arms from some plebeian fighting master. Fencing schools had bad reputations and were often frequented by pugnacious and dissolute characters. Men whose profession was fighting were suspected of using their skills for their own ends and their special skills were sometimes employed by their patrons to execute some private vengeance. In order to mitigate the evil of these independent swordsmen both in their professional teaching and in their private lives,

Henry VIII incorporated all the most celebrated teachers of defence into a company and forbade anyone to teach the art of fencing on any pretense in any part of England that did not belong to the Noble Science of Defence. In this way the standards were raised among the English teachers, but this also gave the Masters a monopoly in the kingdom.

Fencing schools under Elizabeth had a much better reputation than in former times. When foining became common in England during the first quarter of Elizabeth's reign, Italian and Spanish teachers were the rage in London much to the chagrin of the old established English Masters of Defence. Fencing became an essential part of a gentleman's education and English travelers were advised when abroad to study fencing in either Padua or Rome. The Italian fencing masters were gentlemen (for no person of lesser degree could presume to teach arms in their country) and as such were on an equal social footing with their patrons. They set themselves up in a very grand manner which was greatly resented by the English Masters of Arms who depended on the patronage of the nobility for a good part of their livelihood.

Apparently Elizabeth had renewed the monopoly of the Master of Defence but the organization could not produce the original document conferring their privileges and therefore could not persuade a justice of the legality of their prosecution against foreign fencing masters. Rocco Bonetti's repeated complaints to the Privy Council of being harassed by the "common fencers" (*The Fight Master*, May 1986) is an example of the conflict between the English Masters who were trying to exercise their monopoly and an Italian who was not licensed to teach fencing in the realm. In Bonetti's case the Masters even agreed to waive the requirement of fourteen years apprenticeship to an English Master provided that Rocco could play his prizes for their licenses which would either show his skill to "hit anie Englishman with a thrust upon anie button" or expose his pretensions. But the class distinction between them allowed Rocco to refuse to recognize the "base mechanical" who challenged him to prove his skills. This put the Masters of Defence in a quandary for if they took action prescribed by their patent the outcome might be ambiguous, and, if they didn't assert their rights others might try to defy them. Some of the junior Provosts tried to provoke Rocco into drawing upon them in a public street which would make Rocco the aggressor and give the young Provosts the legal right to defend themselves. Rocco specifically named Issac Kennard and Francis Caverly but since they lived in the liberties of Whitefriars and Blackfriars they were not within the jurisdiction of the city of London. (But on the other hand, the Aldermen were not going to allow Rocco the "freedom of the city" which he had requested as a foreign Fencing Master). So both the English Masters and Bonetti basically found their hands were tied.

Another reason for the Englishman's reluctance to accept the supremacy of the point over the edge is pointed out by Sir Richard Burton in his *The Book of the Sword*. Burton claimed that the physical stature of the northern European with his heavy upper body muscularity lent itself to the swinging action of the sword, while the leaner southern European with his light build and comparatively small muscular power adapted easily to the thrusting action of the rapier. For this reason the English chose the long straight, ponderous two-edged blade which suited their physical stature and the use of their power of momentum in

swinging a sword. Burton goes on to comment that the cutting action is a more familiar action to man than thrusting. Human nature strikes "rounder" until training teaches him to hit out straight from the shoulder.

Puncture wounds are also harder to heal than cuts. Most wounded duelists did not die immediately from the wound itself but from the infection that set into the wound or from internal bleeding. In spite of the substantial number of duels and the fact that so many men were armed there was relatively little actual killing in the duels of the sixteenth century, although there was a great deal of maiming. The heavy sword with its cutting edge and the buckler or shield allowed for the maximum amount of muscular effort and the biggest spectacular show of violence with the minimum threat to life. A skilled swordsman could completely stop a fight with the skill and weight of the sword putting his opponent out of commission.

After 1560 when the broadsword gradually gave way to the needle-sharp rapier it became easy to kill a man by running him through the body especially in the area of the thorax or abdomen. The rapier became a dangerous weapon in the hands of high spirited young men who possessed little sense of self control and no rules of conduct to regulate their behavior. Some of the retainers of noblemen were hardly distinguishable from hired bullies, men who were ready to kill at a word from their masters. They lived on the edge of violence and their love of danger and brutality was notorious.

The Italians brought with them into England a code of dueling which resulted in an improvement of manners. Even George Silver, who hated the Italians as dangerous rivals, felt obliged to concede this. "It hath been commonly held that since the Italians have taught the rapier fight, by reason of the dangerous use therefore, it hath bred great civility amongst our English nation, they will not give the lie, nor with such foul speeches abase themselves; therefore there are fewer frays in these times than were wont to be. It cannot be denied that this is so, that we are more circumspect in our words than thertofore we have been."

By the 1580's the Masters of Defence had begun to include the rapier and dagger as one of their weapons for which they tested proficiency but they still clung to the traditional English weapons of the sword and buckler. It still required a great deal of skill and practice to cut with the edge leading, otherwise the blow would turn and fall on the flat of the sword. The cutting action was better suited in a melee for the thrust required some distance to execute. The English preferred the blunt, daring methods of fighting. They hated craft and subtlety and preferred to plant their feet and stand there and fight without a lot of tricks and dodging. The character of Dick Coones in *Two Angrie Women of Abington* laments: "I shall never see good manhood againe, if it be once gone, this poking fight of rapier and dagger will come up then. Then a man, a good sword and buckler man, will be spitted like a cat or a cunney." The English did not like to see a strong man fall victim to the seemingly unfair tactics of the Italians.

Even though rapier blades were double edged and could be used for either cutting or thrusting, their length resulted in problems of balance and handling. It took a skillful fencer to learn to master these poorly balanced weapons with the unnatural shoulder movement of the thrust, and to take advantage of their length and to effectively make use of the point.

The Italian teachers claimed the Englishman could not thrust straight out from the shoulder with the traditional English sword because the hilt would not allow him to put his forefinger over the quillon nor his thumb on the blade or to hold the pommel in his hand. The English sword forced the combatant to restrict his hold to the handle of the sword which caused the thrust to be driven in short or with a circular motion. With the shorter rapier hilt the Italians could thrust both straighter and much further. Saviolo advised against placing the two first finger under the guard and recommended that the rapier be held with the thumb on the quillons and the forefinger toward the edge of the rapier.

But the main complaint the English had against the rapier and the Italian style was that it made men unserviceable in the wars. Italian teachers taught offence and not defence. They taught men to butcher one another at home but in war made them weak and incapable of killing their enemies. In the action of battle there was no room to draw their "bird spits" and deliver a thrusting action and the thrust was difficult to handle from a swiftly moving horse in battle. The rapier point was ineffective for the piercing of armor, smashing of helmets or for defence against pikemen. Rapiers were viewed as toys fit only for children and not men.

So even though the upper class Englishman quickly adopted to the new fangled and fashionable Italian ways in dress and weapons, the English populace in the sixteenth century refused to accept the Italian methods for economic, physical, social, and national reasons.

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STUDYING WITH THE MASTER AT THE MONASTERY

by Craig Handel

A look at Normand Beauregard's unique troupe of actors who live, breathe and eat stage combat seven days a week, twelve months a year at a Monastery in Rhode Island.

The Monastery, home of the Cumberland Company, lies in the center of five hundred fifty acres of largely undeveloped land. It was once the home of a silent order of trappist monks. Now, the Company utilizes the gatehouse for staff offices and two floors of the old monks dormitory provide rehearsal and classroom spaces. The entire Monastery has been transformed into a five hundred fifty acre creative laboratory where every year hundreds train, rehearse, and perform original theatrical works. These plays are all of the Adventure/Fantasy genre and are highlighted by action packed sequences of powerful stage combat as conceived by Normand Beauregard and the Cumberland Company ensemble.

As a Fight Master in the Society of American Fight Directors, Beauregard has been a ubiquitous choreographer since the early seventies. His work has been noted in a diversity of mediums, from MTV music videos and numerous stage productions, to Kathleen Turner's Fight Master for the film *Jewel of the Nile*. In 1983, along with dance choreographer Yvonne Seggerman, and actor/writer Craig Handel, Beauregard formed the Cumberland Company for the Performing Arts. It was a bold, adventurous concept calling for a year round theatre program, producing only original works, based in the hinterlands of Rhode Island. Coinciding with the theatrical performances would be a well-rounded training program of acting, music, dance, and stage combat, designed to bring a largely untrained ensemble of local Rhode Islanders to a level of professional performance capability. In the beginning, of course, there was no money anywhere.

For three years the Company struggled. The staff worked for next to nothing. Yet, somehow production quality and quantity maintained positive momentum. "No secret there," remarked Beauregard, "hard work, long hours, and a desire to survive kept us from folding." Now in its fourth year, the hard work, long hours, and desire to survive persist, but every day the staff of Cumberland Company is now beginning to realize that the toughest years are behind them. Six new staff positions have been filled which means six more artists are making a living, doing what they love. At the box-office, attendance records are being broken at nearly every performance. And on the road, the Company is being heavily booked at educational institutions all over the east coast. Plans for a 1987 national tour are now underway.

"But one of the most valuable by-products of our growth," says Beauregard, "is the quality of performers we are beginning to attract. The word of our program has hit the theatrical grapevine and the response has been very gratifying." That response has come in the form of some talented performers who have made a long distance pilgrimage to the Monastery and are currently involved in the Cumberland Company experience.

Patrick Mulcahy is a recent graduate of the University of Syracuse Drama Department. He has worked for Syracuse Stage as a stunt coordinator in the Terry Schrieber directed production of *Luv* and as fight choreographer for *Bent*. His acting credits include Ken Talley in *The Fifth of July* and Claude in *Hair* and a recent Syracuse stage production of *Romeo and Juliet* directed by Arthur Stoorch, in which he played Sampson and served as fight captain under Fight Master Normand Beauregard. It was during rehearsals for *Romeo and Juliet* that Patrick first learned of the Cumberland Company. He followed up his initial interest with a visit to the Monastery in March. There, he sat in on a rehearsal of the Cumberland Company's core ensemble, which trains and rehearses year round. "What I saw," Patrick recalls, "was a group of people excited about what they were doing and being disciplined about it." Shortly thereafter, he decided to spend the summer with the Cumberland Company. His time is spent in classes and rehearsals. Like all students in the summer program, he is cast in a role written specifically for him. He will be playing Tom Catwell in *THE FAIRE or Tales of the Knights of Revelry*, a six hour adventure-fantasy play that will be performed across six stages located on the Company's twelve acre wooded performance site. Since Patrick is a versatile performer, the role has been written to utilize his dance, fight, acting, music and acrobatic talents. Patrick is impressed with the entire process. "In order to perform you must have the physical routines nailed. You can't have any doubts. Norm's perceptions in problem solving are incredible, which is essential in a program like this where you are constantly being challenged to break through your personal barriers." Pat also feels that the three hours a day that he spends in various dance, juggling, and stunt-acro sessions have enabled him to master a variety of fundamental techniques and have broadened his range of performance skills. He has no doubts that his decision to join the Cumberland Company was a "good move, career-wise. It's a tremendous opportunity to train fight-wise with some of the best, on top of receiving consistent quality training in acting and dance."

Joel Mason, an affiliate member of the Society of American Fight Directors, has worked all over the country as an actor/combatant and stuntman. He assisted Fight Master David Leong in teaching combat and stunts at the Clown College in Florida. It was Leong who referred Joel to the Cumberland Company. "I was looking for an intense summer of combat training and David told me to check out Norman's program." Since his arrival, Joel has been most impressed with the ensemble atmosphere. "This is a company of devoted people who plan to be here a while. You have people here who have been training for three years in the same program. There is a consistency of vocabulary that I haven't found anywhere else, and the combatants have an ability to assimilate and retain choreography very quickly." Joel also finds Beauregard's marriage of sword and hand-to-hand techniques "different and extremely exciting." Joel was surprised by the quality of other aspects of the program. "I'm thrilled and delighted by the quality of acting instruction," he said. "It's as good as I've had anywhere. And the fact that excellent ballet barre classes are offered, free of charge, is an added bonus." Joel, who is cast in *Tales of the Knights of Revelry*

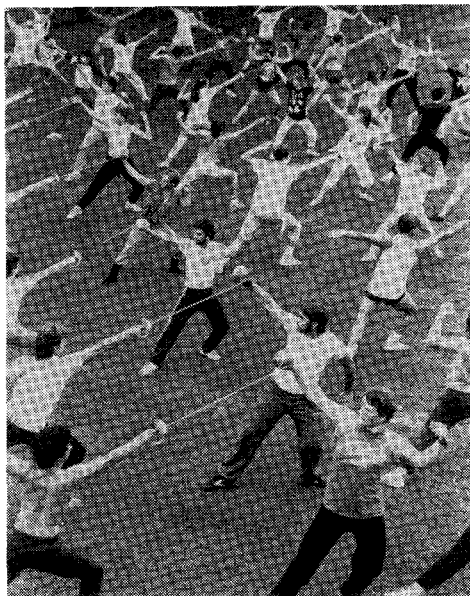
as a monk who can transform himself into different animals, is excited by the performance opportunities the company offers. "You're not working in a vacuum here. Everything points toward performance."

Steve Eliasson is a New York based actor who heard about the Cumberland Company from Miklos Bartha, fencing master at Santelli Studios in New York City. He was pleasantly surprised by the openness of the Company. "When I arrived it seemed as though I made instant friends with people who have been here for three years. The veterans of the company are very giving with their time. People are willing to work with you outside of rehearsal." Steve, who nearly lost an eye in a fencing mishap several years ago, has been impressed with the safety of the combat program. He is also excited about the type of work being done at the Company. "It's not a rehash of old plays," he says. "It's all new work that is developed out of a creative ensemble atmosphere. I have found myself establishing new boundaries because here you are allowed to fail. If you do there are people who will help you overcome those failures. It is a chance not only to work, but to work well."

If all goes well, Joel, Steve, and Patrick will be afforded the opportunity to join Cumberland Company's touring ensemble for the fall-winter tour. Beauregard remarked that "Plans for the Company include a paid touring ensemble made up of the actor/combatants who have passed through our summer program."

The program that has evolved at the Monastery in Cumberland is a unique entity in the stage combat arena. Daily quality training over a three month period culminates in practical application of that training in a spectacular performance venue. The opportunity to participate in the creative process from conception to execution, the chance to step into an established ensemble of skilled artists that welcomes and openly embraces newcomers and the chance to create and perform original work in a role that has been specifically written for each performer are all part of the Cumberland Company experience. And finally, the Cumberland Company provides an atmosphere for artistic growth and learning. It is an opportunity to acquire new skills that can be utilized to either enhance a professional career in theatre or, for the teacher, to acquire knowledge that can be passed on to students.

For those of us who are enamored of action theatre and whose heads are filled with the spectacular possibilities such theatre can provide, the Cumberland Company is a viable opportunity to see our visions realized.



Stage Combat class at the Cumberland Company.

MAYHEM IN MEMPHIS--the 1986 NATIONAL STAGE COMBAT WORKSHOP

by Dr. Robin McFarquhar

On June 13th this summer some forty-eight students, three master teachers and four assistants arrived in Memphis for the start of what turned out to be the biggest and best National Workshop yet. Actors, directors, dancers and teachers all eagerly assembled for three weeks of staged violence and mayhem in the hometown of the "King of Rock n' Roll." The teaching staff had changed from initial expectations due to last minute commitments. In attendance initially were David Boushey(rapier and dagger for three weeks); Drew Fracher(quarterstaff, then unarmed for two weeks); J.R. Beardsley(broadsword and unarmed for three weeks). After three days Allen Suddeth arrived for his first workshop to teach courtsword for the remainder of the session. Also, after two weeks Bob Miles arrived to talk about and teach some stunts for film, and the "Dean" Paddy Crean arrived to teach a week of sabre. In attendance for the first time also were four assistant teachers, Susan Chrietzberg(also the local coordinator for the workshop), T. J. Glenn, Rick Sordelet and Robin McFarquhar.

The first week went smoothly except for a few changes in classrooms and a valiant effort by J. R. Beardsley to teach broadsword outside in ninety degree plus weather! The weather, in fact, was probably one of the only bad facets of the workshop. It never seemed to go below ninety degrees and ,with the humidity, always seemed to be above one hundred degrees. Luckily the dorm rooms in which everyone was staying were so well air-conditioned that some people were heard to complain about how cold it was! The teaching spaces were also mercifully air conditioned and reasonably spacious so classes proceeded at full steam ahead. Included in the first week were two seminars mainly focused on the Society, the certification test and care of weapons.

The week ended unfortunately on a down note when most of the group went to see Polanski's *Pirates* on Friday night and walked out feeling very sad! A more "up" group you couldn't have seen going into the movie, or more "down" group you couldn't possibly have foreseen coming out of the movie!

Things brightened up the next day, however, when after a morning of classes the group assembled to go to see Graceland, the home of the "King." For some this may well have turned out to be the highlight of the workshop! A good time was had by all, so much so that a couple of security guards followed the group around in case we had "too much" fun. There was even talk of making Elvis an honorary Fight Master! After all, he did have a black belt and certainly performed a number of film fights!

Sunday was the first day of rest, although some students insisted on doing some work on their fights especially the quarterstaff. But the weekend ended with a very pleasant paddle

boat ride on the Memphis Queen down the Mississippi on Sunday.

The second week began in earnest with classes all day and seminars in the evening ranging from choreographing fights for the stage and soaps, to seeing a number of weapons from American Fencers Supply, Dennis Graves, and Rod Casteel. Despite all the planned classwork and the general weariness, the students were already eagerly working on their certification fights until late into the evening.

Just when everyone thought they were getting used to the intensity of the work the third week began with the knowledge that the certification test would occur at the end of the week. In addition to the normal classes, Bob Miles taught a series of extremely useful and fascinating seminars in the evening on stunt coordinating for film and television. After each session combatants could be seen scurrying off to various places in the theatre and dorm to work on their fights until the very late hours of the night. Paddy Crean also began teaching sabre which was enjoyed by all especially the last class which focused on "Poop Deck" fighting(wall-work) and "Baronial Hall" fighting(table-work) complete with the music from *The Sea Hawk* and *Robin Hood*! To say that Paddy once again touched the soul of everyone he came in contact with would be a gross understatement. He was quite simply a wonderful source of inspiration to everyone.

The last week was unfortunately marred only by one thing: the frequent occurrence of injuries, including a possible broken wrist, a broken toe and a cut to the hand requiring some eight stitches. The weariness was beginning to show and accidents were happening as is inevitable. Finally, however, the time for the test arrived and as can be expected everyone was once again infused with one last burst of energy.

The test went very smoothly and very successfully considering the forty combatants that took part. As everyone had expected throughout the workshop, the standard was extremely high, resulting in thirty-four passing the test five with recommendations. The scenarios were extremely inventive and ranged from two men playing nuns in a piece entitled "Bad Habits," to "Start the Restoration Without Me" which everyone agreed was probably one of the best certification fights ever seen. Mark Olsen and Robert Seale played two English explorers who discovered a lost "dueling chamber." When one of them picked up a talisman he turned into a primitive man set on killing his partner hence the unarmed fight. His partner ended the fight by "breaking his neck" and removing the talisman. Miraculously the Englishman returned with no knowledge of what had just occurred. They then picked up rapiers and daggers and became Scottish duelists ending with a double kill. Finally, they picked up the courtswords and became French duelists complete with insults and dialogue in French. This was a highly original and successful idea that a brief description hardly does justice too.

After a very brief tech rehearsal (about an hour) everyone rushed off to get some dinner and be back for a public performance, "Friday Night at the Fight." Quite a sizeable crowd arrived and had a very enjoyable evening culminating in a standing ovation for all the participants involved.

Once the house was clear a final awards ceremony was given for Best Female Fighter: Roseanne Hauer; Best Male Fighter: Brian Byrnes and Brian Tinker; and best fight: Mark Olsen and Robert Seale. All that was left was to retire to a local inn that had shown us much hospitality over the three weeks for a farewell get-together.

The next day saw many tired but happy people wandering off to numerous places in the U.S. and Canada to pass on or use their new found skills in promoting good stage fighting as an art in itself. Everyone seemed to agree that the workshop had been highly successful from the organization to the teaching to the students themselves. Overall, everyone had a good time, learned a lot and made good friends. The 1987 workshop will invariably benefit by the success of the "Mayhem in Memphis!"

Results of the Certification Test

620 Steve Shepard	
621 Martin English	
622 Jeff Norton	
623 John Miskulin	
624 Bill Ferrell	
625 Brian Hoteling	
626 Dan Carter	
627 Sean Mason	
628 David Holt	
629 Doug McKenzie	
630 Cindy Parker	
631 Gilbert McCauley	
632 Kathy Fredricks	
633 Roseanne Hauer	
634 Kevin Burnley	
635 Robert Seale(rec)	
636 Mark Olsen (rec)	
637 Chris Gebauer	
638 Jeff Amaral	
639 Ralph Anderson	
640 Paul Lundrigan	
641 Bill Doan	
642 Robert Morse	
643 Deedra Ricketts	
644 Nancy Santori	
645 Payson Burt(rec)	
646 Jim Myers	650 Jeff Alm
647 Terri Harrison	651 Adam Gomez
648 Chris Noke	652 Brian Tinker(rec)
649 Peter Turner	653 Brian Byrnes(rec)

THE THREE MUSKETEERS at Champlain

David Leong tackled the enormous challenge of directing the entire Champlain Shakespeare Festival production of *The Three Musketeers*. The production in Burlington, Vermont, runs close to three hours and includes sixteen fights.! David incredibly used a large variety of weapons: rapiers, daggers, cloaks, muskets, pistols and a swordcane. Only a whip and what appeared to be wooden mallets were used ineffectively. David's fights are very dynamic. They appropriately include a lot of dirty fighting. David relied heavily on cutting and evasion. I would have preferred more point work and blade contact. there are some excellent special effects. The heads of a flower bed adjacent to a duel fly into the air when decapitated. A piece of fruit appears to be deftly cut in half in mid-air. There is a candelabra whose "sliced" candles fall to the floor when Porthos stamps his foot, but the swordwork that preceded this effect did not quite establish its credibility. There is no climactic duel between Rochefort and D'Artagnan. I missed this, especially since the two have several inconclusive confrontations during the evening.

As director of the entire production, David makes good use of the handsome thrust stage. The condemnation of Milady in a fog is particularly effective.

In a large cast with only one Equity actor there are several strong performances. Lisa Johnson provides a Milady of beauty, sexuality and cunning. Her hypocritical seduction of the Puritan Felton is outstanding. Thomas Schall, teaching assistant at the 1984 National Stage Combat Workshop in Salem, gives a very substantial performance as Athos. He makes this character's emotional darkness palpable.

David's production provides an essentially young company with an excellent opportunity to develop their acting and combat skills.

Charles Conwell

EXTREMITIES for Philadelphia Company

In May I had the pleasure of directing the violence in *Extremities* for the Philadelphia Company. The two principal combatants, Helena Ruoti and Jonathan Fuller, were both athletic and talented. Helena had played the role of Marjorie in Pittsburgh and contributed several really good ideas. When Raul says to Marjorie, "Undo the belt" and she complies, he took the belt completely off and put it around her neck like a noose. Helena slipped her hand unobtrusively between the belt and her throat for safety. Raul then dragged Marjorie around the room by the belt, pulled her to her feet, and then pulled her head down bringing her eyes in contact with the can of insect repellent that would provide her escape. Helena felt that Marjorie would be able to hog-tie and blindfold Raul only if he were unconscious. Scene one concludes in the script with Marjorie garroting Raul with an extension cord. In this production she pulled the cord, grabbed a heavy glass ashtray and seemingly hit Raul over the head. The lights blacked out on impact. In order to provide cushioning for the attempted rape and Marjorie's escape and retaliation, I concealed half inch high density foam under a large oval carpet center stage. This allowed me to eliminate the pile of pillows that I found so obvious in the Off Broadway production. The Philadelphia production proved very popular and was extended for two weeks. It concluded its run without injury. **Charles Conwell**

ROMEO AND JULIET

According to Michael Grossberg in the *Columbus Dispatch* one of the best things about the Actor's Summer Theatre's lifeless production of *Romeo and Juliet* was the energetic brawls and swordfights staged by New York fight director Jason Kushner who was brought in three weeks before the production to work with the enthusiastic and athletic company of actors in staging the four big fight scenes. Grossberg found the Mercutio, Tybalt, Romeo fights to be especially vivid and very real looking-- so real that on opening night Romeo was wounded at the end of the first act which caused an unscheduled break in the Friday the 13th production.

Joe Kucan

JULIUS CAESAR was performed as part of the Silver Anniversary of the Utah Shakespearean Festival in Cedar City Utah this past summer. The production which was staged in the Jacobean dress was directed by Michael Addison with fight choreography by David Boushey.

The first piece of staged violence was the assassination of Caesar. Fortunately the senate members wore robes in this scene which not only hid the concealed daggers until the appropriate moment but also masked the dagger thrusts during the assassination. In this totemic ritual Boushey carefully differentiated between characters by their method of attack. Casca initiated the action by stabbing Caesar in the back while timid Cinna hesitatingly held his dagger out between his own body and Caesar's until Caesar was shoved onto it as he was manipulated by the assassins. Cassius on the other hand stabbed Caesar in the back and then with added vehemence twisted his dagger in even further once it had pierced the body. Brutus, who so wanted to avoid a "slaughter house," turned his head away as he thrust and then in almost loving overtones, embraced Caesar as he fell.

But the biggest challenge to the fight choreographer in **Julius Caesar** was the continuous battle of Phillipi which in this production used only the Roman gladius (constructed by Dennis Graves) and four foot rectangular shields which limited the variety of action available to the choreographer. The battle began with the formality of war with the combatants creating the illusion of the Roman phalanx as they came through the center doors shield to shield and faced their opponents in a similar formation. But the phalanx limited movements to thrusts or overhead vertical cuts until the formation broke up and allowed the action to open up as Brutus' army began to win the battle.

The second battle scene revealed the break down in the discipline of battle as the armies charged in from both sides of the stage. By the third scene the battle had dissolved into individuals from all sides trying to survive on

their own with one encounter flowing into another with a strobe like effect creating the whole battle. This could have been enhanced or better focused with the use of lighting. The fourth scene showed Brutus' men regrouping and chasing off Antony's and by the fifth scene the tide had turned and Antony's army had the upperhand over Brutus' tired and exhausted troops.

The officers wore gorgets and gauntlets over their Jacobean costumes which symbolically suggested the atmosphere of war without confining their movements with breastplates and helms. The soldiers wore long skirted collarless buff coats and in most battle scenes it was hard to distinguish one army from another, and, even though this was a civil war, the colored arm bands did little to differentiate the armies so that the audience could follow the flow of the action.

The battle scenes were enhanced by drums whose pounding, driving beat heightened the dramatic moments and set a cadence to the battles.

While the Roman gladius worked in the battle scenes, they were without scabbards which forced those handling them before the battle scenes to walk about the stage holding them during whole scenes which made the actors appear awkward. Only Brutus entrusted his sword to a servant and then quickly retrieved it on an exit.

The only piece of staged violence that did not work was the beating of Cinna the poet which was repeated at the top of the second act. Since Antony's scene had been cut considerably prior to this, it was unclear in the staging that the entire populace was on a rampage and out of control and the objects used to beat Cinna were not identifiable as stolen objects taken in looting. This made the whole scene come across as pointless and unmotivated and then was repeated with all its confusion at the beginning of the second act.

Despite the flaws in the production, David Boushey's five battle scenes, assassinations and suicides created a heightened realism to the theatricality of this youthful production.

Linda McCollum

I have a question I would like to pose to the membership, and they may write to me at my college address below.

What schools offer graduate courses in combat?

When did they begin?

Who teaches these courses?

How many units of credit are given ?

I taught graduate level combat at the University of Texas at Tyler and now at Kutztown University but I have no idea if there are others or when they began. I will let **The Fight Master** know what I discover from those responding to my questions.

Dr. John Callahan
Department of Speech and Theatre
College of Visual and Performing Arts
Kutztown University
Kutztown, Pennsylvania 19530

Owing to the omission of some words in my letter to you on page 33 of your May 1985 issue it makes it appear that I suggested that Small Swords have "curved guards protecting the hand completely." This, of course, is not so. I was referring to *sabres* having these guards in contrast to *small swords*.

Incidentally I do prefer the American Society's habit of calling Small Swords" Court Swords." Small Swords, which we mostly call them over here, are constantly confused with Short Swords and confusion spreads until one finds oneself slipping into the habit. Court Sword is a much clearer name for these weapons.

You refer to the Patrick Crean Prize at RADA as being established by the Society of British Fight Directors. This is not so. It was set up by RADA itself, at my suggestion, to reward students who did not win the Bryan Mosley Prize for the Best Performance in Armed Combat. Bryan has always maintained there is only one Best. But since other Adjudicators judging this prize have been unable to differentiate between two equally skilled performers in the same fight (not, by the way, has Bryan always been able to do it himself) I initiated the Patrick Crean for the

unlucky student who didn't get the Best. It can also be awarded to other students the Adjudicator wants to reward. In fact there were two winners of the Patrick Crean at the last Prize Fights.

Yours sincerely,
Henry Marshall, Editor, **The Fight Director**
Master-at- Arms to the Royal
Academy of Dramatic Art

I'd like to clear up some apparent misconceptions concerning my article "We Have Met the Enemy and He is Us" in the September 1985 issue of **The Fight Master**. But first, I'd like to thank Dave Boushey, Dennis Graves and Martin La Platney for sharing their thoughts by writing in to **The Fight Master** (and to F. Braun McAsh and Craig Turner for sharing their thoughts in personal communication).

As I stated in the title of my article, and as to the questions I raised by contrasting some of our techniques to Mr. Barry's, I'm wondering if the "enemy" might not be us, the members of the Society. The article was intended to stir healthy debate amongst the Society on the following issues: (1) is B. H. Barry the most famous choreographer in the U.S.? If so, are there lessons to be learned from him? Do we as a Society agree with his methods? and (2) If we disagree with his methods and procedures, or perhaps only his reasoning behind them, what can we offer as an alternative? To date, no one has addressed these questions in their responses.

Both Mr. La Platney and Mr. Boushey imply that I am setting the SAFD in an antagonistic relationship with Mr. Barry. They are mistaken. I in no way impugned Mr. Barry's standing in the professional community, and I stand behind my assertions as to the facts of our experiences together. Mr. La Platney's assertions of his experience notwithstanding, while working on **Henry IV, Part I** neither Mr. Barry or his assistant mentioned "fencing measure" or "distance" as a safety measure. Is this good Fight Choreography? If not, why not?

As to the issue of parrying with the flat, thanks to Mr. La Platney and Mr. Graves for clarifying my point, i.e. that it is much easier (and probably more accurate historically, though we cannot be sure) to parry with the flat if the movement is a "sweeping arc designed to intersect and re-direct the opponent's cut, and, if possible, continue around in a "moulinet" action to return the attack" (quoting Dennis Graves in his letter). This movement is familiar to Kendo and Iado players, and is close to the movement in Kali discussed in Mr. LaPlatney's letter. It is the movement frozen in illustration in **The Art and History of Personal Combat** by Arthur Wise cited by Mr. La Platney ("Attacks were met with counter-attacks, rather than parries"...p. 53). However, my point is that executed one-handed, not as part of of a continuing movement, but as in sabre fencing, this move is both difficult to execute and, in my opinion, unsafe.

I have to agree with Charles Killian's letter condemning the use "sharps" onstage. This is a practice advocated by B. H. Barry, amongst others, claiming on **LATENIGHT** with David Letterman that "it gives the actor an increased sense of safety." I can see how it gives actors an increased sense of DANGER, and quite justifiably too, but how this realization of actual peril will improve their safety escapes me. I can see NO good reasons for using unbated swords, and many reasons against, most especially since the vast majority of the audience cannot perceive the difference between buttoned and sharp swords even if they knew to look. Perhaps some member will clarify in a future issue?

Another crucial point to clear up, is that Mr. La Platney states that it does not speak well of Society trained fighters that they had difficulty adapting to Mr. Barry's techniques. This is a misconception. The Society trained fighters in **Henry IV, Part I** may have had "difficulty" adapting to Mr. Barry's methods, but were able to do so. Those who were less well trained (including some of Barry's own students) were not able to adapt and consequently sustained injury.

Mr. La Platney also mentions disgruntled Society members of his acquaintance who would be able to write unflattering articles about certain Full Members they have worked with. I agree with Mr. La Platney's assertion that "we are not trying to promote one way of doing things" as a statement of fact, but disagree with

him as a matter of policy. I believe we should be promoting a "way of doing things" a safe, effective, SAFD "way."

No member has yet voiced an opinion about Mr. Barry's practice of attacking a shield with the flat. Is this safe, effective choreography? Is it historically accurate?

Finally, no member has as yet responded to (in my opinion) the most crucial safety issue, Mr. Barry's advocacy of "continuous eye-contact." Is this good Fight Direction? Is this practice safe? Is it agreed with by most members of the Society? If not, what alternative techniques are to be offered? I'll be anxious to hear from the membership on these issues.

Tony Soper

HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

While doing a hands-on examination of bladed weapons at the Royal Ontario Museum, I recently discovered something which may be useful to those reproducing period weapons for the stage. While examining an early sixteenth century swept-hilt rapier, I noticed a part of the hilt previously unknown to me. Off one of the sweepings that come off the rings above the quillons, about where it begins to curve to form the knuckle-bow, was a short down-curving half-ring that fit inside of the hilt from the aforementioned piece to join the grip where the grip and the ricasso meet. In the traditional rapier grip the thumb normally rests on the ricasso on the inside of the quillon. However, if the thumb is removed so that the sword is being held more like a broadsword ("hammer grip") the thumb rests securely in the curvature of the ring. I began examining other rapiers and found that while this feature did appear on both English and Italian swept-hilt rapiers, it was not a universal feature and was totally absent from all cup-hilts in the Royal Ontario Museum collection. I then started working backwards and found the half-ring on two other swords--a mid-fifteenth century Italian falchion and a schiavona. The falchion is a single-edged short-bladed weapon designed for close-quarter combat. Of what use would this ring be on such a weapon and why would it turn up on a long-bladed rapier over a hundred thirty years later?

Here is my postulation. Since the falchion

in question had a partially enclosed hilt it is impossible (and decidedly unwise) to hook one's finger over the crossbar. This might not be done to effect greater blade control--it is not really necessary with a close-range single-edged sword--but rather, having something to pull against adds force to a slashing blow and also facilitates the continuation of the cut and subsequent withdrawal of the blade after contact has been made. It also adds power to a down-cut. Now how does any of this apply to the rapier? The question of cut over thrust would rage from the early fifteen hundreds to the development of the Colichemarde. But one thing is certain: in order to lengthen the blade and still maintain the speed necessary for rapier combat, the blade's weight must be reduced. Rapier blades are narrow in comparison to a broadsword and built for flexibility, not armour-cracking weight.

Since the lighter weight of the blades does not allow for an effective cut to be delivered simply by striking the target, unless it lands on bare skin, most rapier techniques rely on the draw-cut. The blade is placed on the target by a blow and then rapidly pulled back while maintaining firm contact, thus utilizing both pressure in a slicing motion and much larger area of the blade edge. The hilt construction of almost any rapier allows for the forefinger to be hooked over the quillon on the knuckle-bow side. This allows pressure to be maintained on a draw-cut using the inside or top edge. However, for some draw-cuts using the outside or bottom edge, particularly for those of a diagonal nature such as the *mandritti rouroursi*, the thumb rest allows for a much more forceful draw, exposing more useable blade-edge, freeing as it does, the wrist-joint without sacrificing any pressure behind the contact. The thumb-rest also allows much more freedom in actions like the *molinello* where removing the thumb from the ricasso frees up the wrist.

It is my contention that either certain swordsmiths included this half-ring as a matter of course or that it was an option requested by the buyer whose fighting style required it. My theory is seemingly strengthened by the fact that this feature does not appear on later rapiers. It is easily physically possible but later fencing styles did eventually favour the point. This feature, although by no means universal, appears on enough swept-hilt rapiers of different

national origins to suggest it was popular. It is very definitely functional and not an anachronistic hold-over from other swords of earlier times. The rapier developed in a period of great change, both socially and technologically.

This is simply a working theory. Obviously I must examine a broader range of swept-hilts than are currently available. But I believe my extrapolation has historical validity. If anyone has any information regarding this design feature and its use, be it to support, refute or put forth a new idea, I would very much appreciate the input. I also hope to see this design feature incorporated into a theatrical rapier as it does allow more versatility to make use of historically accurate techniques.

F. Braun McAsh

CERTIFICATIONS

University of Illinois

On May 5, I adjudicated Dr. Robin McFarquhar's students at the University of Illinois. I am pleased to say that all students attempting the certification test passed. My sincere congratulations to Robin for a job well done. This is the third year in a row that he has certified his students and the Society of American Fight Directors should be thankful for his enthusiasm and dedication toward this testing procedure.

As usual Robin's students were well trained and solidly coached. My only criticism was that many of the students appeared to be "playing" their characters instead of "being" them. An example of this occurred throughout the unarmed sequence: Immediately after a stomach punch or kick to the groin was executed, the victim reacted with a comeback line eliciting a comic response and then shortly thereafter dropped all evidence of pain. Thus the students were saying, "this isn't reality, we're actors playing at fighting."

One other note worthy of mention is that there were too many lines interspersed throughout the fight scenes. This generally prohibited a great sense of danger from occurring. It also stops the natural flow and progression of the choreography.

Despite my criticism of their scene work, I do believe the fight work was clean and safe. With the exception of a few visible knaps in the hand to hand fight and some missed parries and cuts, the technique was executed with clarity.

I'd like to thank Robin for inviting me to see his fights from *The Very Last Lover of the River Cane*. This James McClure play, basically a lengthy barroom brawl, is quite a vehicle for a fight director and I encourage you to locate a script. Robin did a fine job of staging the unarmed violence, especially the complicated task of hiding the knaps from an audience on two

sides no more than three feet from the action. The following students were certified.

- 573 Don Nicholas
- 574 Patricia Kane
- 575 Jeanine Vogt
- 576 Peggy Burr
- 577 Doug Goetz
- 578 Regina Byrd Smith
- 579 Duncan Rouleau
- 580 Greg Rohe
- 581 Bill Lynn
- 582 Sandy Denyon
- 583 Michael Halberstam
- 584 Kayla McKee
- 585 Demetrius Pappageorge
- 586 Paul Sass
- 587 Steve Humphrey
- 588 Martin Glynn

Instructor: Dr. Robin McFarquhar
Adjudicator: David Leong

Cornish Institute

On May 2, 1986 twelve students at the Cornish Institute in Seattle, Washington were tested. They were students of David Boushey and I am pleased to report that ten passed and two of those received a recommended for exceptional ability and creativity.

If there was one problem worth mentioning it would fall in the area of overall inability to "digest" and "personalize" the series of moves given them. In the outstanding fight in which both combatants received a recommended, this was not apparent.

In the humor department, awards would have to go to *Latvian King of the High Seas* with Beth Kincaid and Juris Skujins demonstrating with excellent comedic flair good energy and creativity. Also Carmel Baird and Alenka Wulff turned in good performances in a very strong *Taming of the Shrew*.

However, the outstanding fight of the day was an excellent *Coriolanus* performed by Robert Mac Dougall and Michael Loggins. It had totally committed acting, performance tempo and well

acted yet safely pulled cuts and punches. Both actors demonstrated exceptional balance from which they could safely extend and "appear" one hundred percent involved. Indeed a pleasure to witness this work.

Congratulations to David Boushey for the following results.

- 589 Robert Mac Dougall (rec)
- 590 Michael Loggins (rec)
- 591 Carmel Baird
- 592 Beth Kincaid
- 593 Russell Reed
- 594 Randy Miller
- 595 Alenka Wulff
- 596 Juris Skujins
- 597 Mark Pinckney
- 598 David Gasman

Instructor: David Boushey
Adjudicator: Erik Fredricksen

Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts

I recently traveled to Philadelphia to adjudicate the students at the Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts, trained by Affiliate Mr. Charles Conwell. I was struck with two things about this test: First, the College itself is giving great support to this program. Teachers, faculty, administration and students all turned up to cheer on their fellows. Second, the quality of the work supervised and taught by Mr. Conwell is high. He has the students in a very intense two year program, and is using the time well. The fights were all very original, and the techniques taught by Mr. Conwell were well integrated. I would hope for a bit more fluidity in the rapier and rapier/dagger sections in the future, but this is a minor beef. On the other hand, the unarmed sections of the fights were quite good and a great improvement over the last test.

"Best Scene of the Day Awards" go to John Moyer and David Quast for a lively rendition of a teenager happily beating up a toy, and Cyrece Bernstein and Elizabeth Stalder with a wonderful Kate/Bianca scene from *Shrew*.

The following students were certified.

- 599 Diana Scott
- 600 Rodney Creech
- 601 John Peters (rec)

- 602 Marlie Griffin (rec)
- 603 Kymberli Kercher
- 604 Syeed Malic
- 605 Cyrece Bernstein (rec)
- 606 Elizabeth Stalder (rec)
- 607 John Moyer
- 608 David Quast
- 609 Sandra Landers
- 610 Sophie Maletsky
- 611 Chuck Lacy
- 612 Warner Wiley
- 613 Du Chisiza (rec)
- 614 Tony Sanders
- 615 Susanne Case
- 616 Mimi Helm
- 617 Amy Kitts
- 618 David Fiebert (rec)
- 619 Greg Wood

Instructor: Charles Conwell
Adjudicator: J. Allen Suddeth

University of Washington

On May 3rd I adjudicated the students from the University of Washington Professional Actors Training Program. I have been adjudicating students from this program for several years and always in the past they have made an impressive showing. The acting of the fights has always been a trademark but this year the quality of both fighting and acting dropped off. It is quite obvious that the turmoil that has afflicted the Professional Actors Training Program with the stepping down of Bob Hobbs as head of the program has created a vacuum within the department. The talent and the discipline were not as evident this year. The University of Washington had an impressive record of never having had a failure in the fight tests of past years. This year four students failed the test due primarily to a lack of preparation. Another couple barely passed, but on the positive side--three people gained recommendations.

Mitchell Patrick was the fight instructor and it was his first year as an instructor at the P.A.T.P. He appeared to lack the experience needed to thoroughly train his students although I did see promise in his ability to become a fine teacher. What he really needs is a trip to the National Stage Combat Workshop where he can hone his

skills as a teacher. I certainly don't target him only in this case as many of the teachers in the fight arena could enhance their skills by attending the National Workshop.

By and large the P.A.T.P fights at the University of Washington were adequate but simply not up to the standards of past years. I personally hope that the new administration at the P.A.T.P. will strive to maintain the standards of excellence that have been a trademark at the University of Washington Professional Actors Training Program.

654 Paul Mitri
655 Karen Jo Fairbrook
656 David De Besse
657 Peter Killy
658 Jack Young(rec)
659 Jeff Kline(rec)
660 Mitchell Patrick(rec)

Instructor: Mitchell Patrick
Adjudicator: David Boushey

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David Boushey and **J.R. Beardsley** in collaboration recently were awarded the highest award presented in the theatre on the West Coast for their choreography in the Milton Katsellas production of ***Romeo and Juliet*** starring Linda Perle. The Los Angeles Critics Circle Award for outstanding achievement in fight arranging for 1985 was presented to them at a gala affair at the Roosevelt Hotel on Sunset Blvd. A proud moment for both the recipients and the Society of American Fight Directors.

KAY AOYAMA has been teaching fencing classes during the summer and ran a Fencing Clinic from June 23 to July 5 with Henry de Silva from England. Kay continues to teach opera students at the University of Toronto.

DAVID BOUSHEY recently finished his summer schedule with a teaching assignment at the National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis. He is now stunt coordinator for the film *Indian Summer*. Immediately following he will begin work as a stuntman on the film *The Eagle*, a martial arts film to be shot in the northwest. He will also be choreographing *Romeo and Juliet* for Youngstown University in Youngstown, Ohio in the early winter.

PAYSON BURT is teaching movement and stage combat at Temple University in their three year graduate level program. Payson continues his training in Kung Fu and Tai Chi.

CHARLES CONWELL spent a pleasant week in July teaching twelve talented high school students at the Governor's School of New Jersey unarmed combat for three hours every morning and rapier and dagger for two hours every afternoon. They staged a John Wayne barroom scene and a cocktail party fight between a villain and James or Jessica Bond. Governor Kean visited the unarmed class and saw each pair of students perform the Bond fight. The students learned ten different phrases of rapier and dagger and then combined any five of them to create their own fight. In September Charles returned to the Philadelphia College of Performing Arts. In addition to combat classes, Charles will teach competitive fencing and continues his study of all three modern weapons with fencing master Jim Murray, the fencing coach at Haverford College.

PATRICK CREAN'S book, *More Champagne Darling* can be obtained only from the Patricia Stewart Literary Agency, 105 Church Street, Suite 205, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, M5C 2G3. The telephone number is (416) 366-7727. The book costs \$18.95 plus shipping in Canadian funds.

DREW FRACHER spent the first part of the summer choreographing the Outdoor Drama *Tecumseh!* From there he traveled to Northeastern Missouri State University to direct *Little Foxes* for their Summerplay season. In July Drew taught quarterstaff and hand-to-hand at the National Workshop in Memphis. Leaving the workshop he went to Ohio University for the month of August to teach hand-to-hand, quarterstaff and swordplay at the Physical Theatre Lab, a Movement Workshop held there every year. This fall Drew will be spending time at home working on an original fight show.

ERIK FREDRICKSEN did the fight work for *American Music* with Eric Douglas at the Second Stage in Los Angeles and the duel in *Hamlet* for the University of Washington's production directed by Nick Faust. Erik did the critically acclaimed fights in the Los Angeles Theatre Center's *The Fair Penitent* which was directed by Charles Marowitz and starred Franklyn Seales as well as the fights for *Coriolanus* at Cal Arts for Dakin Mathews. This summer Erik played Oberon in *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and Claudius in *Hamlet* at the Dallas Shakespeare Festival, and staged the fight work as well.

T.J. GLENN doubled Phil Carey on *One Life to Live* in February and in March played a convict on the same show. He co-choreographed *Oklahoma* with his wife Ellyn for The Theatre Group on Long Island, and performed in Boston with the Misfits of Laughter Comedy ensemble for which he

choreographed three sword fights. In May T.J. choreographed fights for the American Theatre Association in New York and taught an eight hour hand-to-hand workshop for actresses in New York. In June T.J. could be found playing the constable and Westmorland in *Henry V* and choreographing and performing a broadsword fight at the Westbury Renaissance Festival and performing a fight on *Another World* with **Richard Raether**. In July he choreographed *Masters of Fence*, a one hour show with seven fights, for The Whole Theatre in Newark before going to the National Workshop in Memphis as **David Boushey's** assistant.

J.D. MARTINEZ will be directing and choreographing *Dreaming and Dueling* for the Semtheatre in Virginia, and choreographing *Rashomon* for the University of Richmond in October. Joseph will be conducting his advanced workshop in the stage combat arts for choreographers, teachers and actor/combatants in the summer of 1987. Interested members should contact Mr. Martinez for information. Enrollment will be limited. Joseph continues to work on his forthcoming book entitled, *The Swords of Shakespeare* and picks up his duties as associate professor of Drama at Washington and Lee University in September.

DR. ROBIN McFARQUHAR choreographed *Henry IV Part I* and *Romeo and Juliet* for the Virginia Shakespeare Festival before assisting at the National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis this summer. This fall Robin will be the movement director on the *Tempest* for the University of Illinois.

RICHARD RAETHER recently choreographed several fights for *One Life to Live* episodes including a mugging and a Texas barroom brawl. Richard also choreographed some thirty five fights for the New York Renaissance Festival which were choreographed and rehearsed over a three month period before the August and September performances. He has choreographed his third *As You Like It* wrestling match in six months. The first two were for the New American Theater in Illinois and Riverside Shakespeare Company in New York and the third was for the New York Renfest's production. Richard is also teaching

stage combat classes in New York as **J. Allen Suddeth's** assistant.

TONY SOPER choreographed the fights and appeared as Laertes/Horatio in *Dogg's Hamlet* at Tacoma Actor's Guild. He also choreographed the unarmed battle in *A Coupla White Chicks Sitting Around Talking*, which included crockery, cooking utensils, food and a plaster cast for Tacoma Actor's Guild. For the Pacific Lutheran University he choreographed the fights for *Romeo and Juliet*. Tony will be appearing in *L.A. Law* on NBC this fall and will co-star on *Kay O'Brien, Surgeon* for CBS.

J. ALLEN SUDDETH continues as Fight Coordinator on the TV shows *One Life to Live* and more recently *Another World*. Allen stages three to four fights a week in such unlikely places as railway cars, mine shafts, parking lots, pool halls, jails and hospital rooms. In the fall he will take the stage as Kent in *King Lear*, as well as stage the fights. This summer Allen taught court sword at the National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis.

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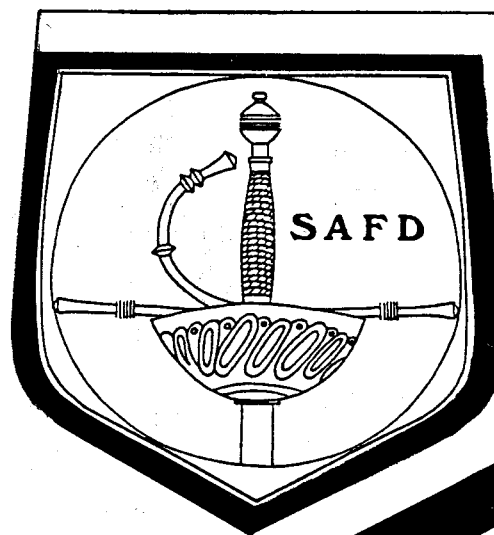
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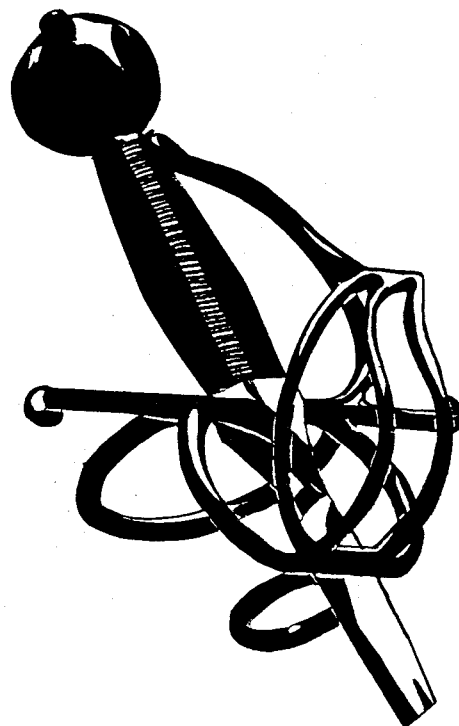


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