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The Society of American Fight Directors

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## **The Fight Master, September 1987, Vol. 10 Issue 3**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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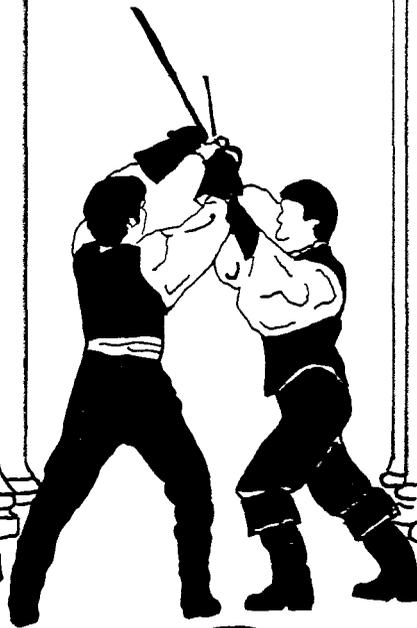
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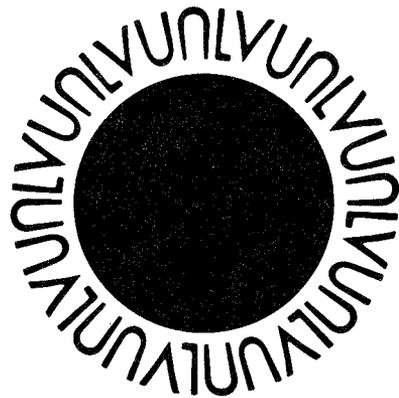
SOCIETY OF  
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# The Fight MASTER

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

September 1987  
Volume X number 3

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### THE FIGHT MASTER

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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.

This issue contains three discussions of the duel in **Les Liaisons Dangereuses** all with totally diverse views. Tony Soper, who in his many travels has seen much of British fight choreographer Malcolm Ransom's work, sees this "transition rapier" duel to be one of the finest examples of Ransom's work while Richard Gradkowski sees this "court sword" duel in a quite different light. Actor Todd Tjaden offers a holistic view of the play and the duel, seeing the duel as physical dialogue, an incarnation of narrative and character. I hope these varying views will encourage others to evaluate and discuss fight choreography and its integration into the whole production.

In this issue we have the report on the National Stage Combat Workshop as well as the report on the first Teacher Certification Workshop in Memphis this summer. Lloyd Caldwell offers the second part of his article on Commedia dell'Arte and continues to explore the origins of slapstick and the techniques still in use today. Greg Michaels gives us a behind the scenes look at the "Conan" show at Universal, showing how it evolved and the problems the actor/combatant has to deal with when he has to perform five to nine shows a day.

I am pleased to announce that the SAFD published monograph by Dr. Leonid Tarassuk on the evolution of parrying daggers in double fencing, **Parrying Daggers and Poinards**, which costs sixteen dollars and ninety-five cents, is available to Society members for ten dollars. Those wishing to secure a copy while they are still available should contact me at the Blue Diamond address.

I wish to again thank Joe Aldridge as well as Randy Hale of Telemedia Services here at UNLV for their help on this issue of **The Fight Master**.

Linda Carlyle McCollum

Adaptation and change are often the hallmarks of health and growth in organizations. This is certainly the case for the Society of American Fight Directors. The SAFD has been changing at an exhilarating pace for the last year. We are improving our standards, developing better means of communicating with the various elements in the entertainment industry, educating more people about the stage combat arts than ever before, and developing new strategies to improve our national visibility.

Some members have vocalized their concern that the Officers of the Society seem to change their minds about SAFD Policies and Procedures every few months. Some members feel uneasy about the rapidity of change within the organization. I hope the majority of members readily see however, that the changes in standards and criteria are positive signs of vitality--signs that the SAFD is truly the foremost exponent of the Art of Stage Combat in North America.

Our national reputation increases dramatically each year, largely because of the excellence of the services our members offer each and every day. New members of the Society who join our ranks are being asked to earn their place among those who have proven themselves time and again in the past. More stringent criteria for being acknowledged by the Society as a Certified Actor Combatant, Certified Teacher or Certified Fight Master are easily justified when we look to the health of the Society over the long term. And what serious professional questions the need for periodic evaluation of performance skills.

The National Stage Combat Workshop and the Teacher Certification workshop are fine examples of high ideals in practice. There are no other training centers in the arts that demand so much from their participants as does the SAFD at these workshops. Only those who clearly, and without a doubt, demonstrate a superior level of expertise pass the difficult testing

# VICE-PRESIDENT'S REPORT

criteria. We all benefit from such rigorous training and testing.

We are indeed honor bound to promote only those individuals who have proven that they are committed to excellence and have the tenacity to continually renew their skills. I am not speaking of elitism, but of a national recognition that must be earned with much effort and sacrifice and maintained with integrity. I feel sure that every member who has attended a SAFD National Workshop supports my efforts in maintaining and promoting the highest of standards for our Society. I wish to thank those members, new and old, who have written or called in support of the recent changes in the structure and criteria for promotions in status within the Society.

A reminder that until January of 1988, our Vice President, Mr. Drew Fracher will be assuming the duties of President while I am on sabbatical in Europe.

**Joseph Martinez**  
September 1987

My Fellow Fighters and Colleagues,

Once more the summer's end is upon us. I trust each of you had a safe and profitable one. As we move towards the end of 1987 I ask each of you to once more pledge yourselves to carrying the SAFD to the forefront of the industry. The word is out and our name is widespread; let us continue to move until everyone in the business knows who we are and what we can do for them.

This year's National Workshop was most exciting and full of progress. The officers met for a week of discussions and policy making, effecting some very good changes. The business of status and change thereof was finalized and all of the possibilities were discussed and dealt with. Linda will be issuing a finalized report on the same and I will be in charge of receiving and reviewing all changes in status from one classification to another. I look forward to this work, knowing that it will serve to increase our credibility in all camps. I urge you all to get the wheels turning in terms of your own status within the organization.

In addition to this, we are in the process of appointing some additional members to our Board of Directors. Our aim is to appoint some individuals with positions in the business world, both entertainment and the professional world at large. Once again, we seek to increase our position in the industry.

As acting President in Joseph's absence, my task will be to keep things on an even keel. I would like very much to hear from any of you if you have problems or suggestions. The open lines of communication are our only hope for advancement.

It is my hope that each and every one of you will continue to support the Society as we grow and move forward. Once again, I charge each of you with getting the word out. Go to your local theatres, union offices, film commissions, universities and schools. Make sure they are aware of your presence in their area and that they know what the Society of

American Fight Directors means for them and their organization. We must continue to educate our audience, and it is a vast one. My thanks to you all. Each of you take care and fight safely.

Your comrade in arms,  
**Drew Fracher**

**TREASURER'S  
REPORT**

Greetings from the newest officer,

I'm pleased to be aboard as your treasurer, and want to extend my thanks to David Boushy for having turned the financial concerns of the Society over to me in fiscal health. Two things are necessary for me to keep it in that healthy state. First, all of you who haven't paid your dues, send them to Linda McCollum in tomorrow's mail. Remember that you lose your status in the Society if you don't pay your dues on time and will have to rejoin as a Friend or go through a re-application process for your particular status.

Secondly, those of you who want to have your students certified must call me so that I can set up an adjudication with the appropriate Fight Master, as determined by geographical location and availability. This arrangement allows the Society to set up the best travel fares, keeps track of the number of students being adjudicated, and makes use of Fight Masters who may be in your area at the time you need one.

If you have questions about getting your students certified, about the current state of your membership, or any other financial matters of the Society, please drop me a note or call. I always enjoy hearing from fighters.

**James Finney**  
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Iowa City, IA 52240  
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# WORKSHOP REPORT

The inner workings of the National Stage Combat Workshop become more complex each year. Since we now have the National Workshop and the Teacher Certification Workshop housed under one roof, we have more staff, assistants and obviously more participants. Planning for next year's workshop begins soon after the closing of the present one. Already on my desk lie letters from Certified Teachers, Associate Members in good standing, and Actor/Combatants requesting that they be considered when selecting next year's teaching assistants. Some people have even begun to request information on next year's dates and registration fee. Both workshops reached maximum capacity as they have in the past and I fully expect them to do so in the future years. All this means is that you must begin to think about next year's plans now. The enrollments will continue to fill earlier each year as has been demonstrated in the past. The nature of the workshops has far exceeded anything we ever expected when it was first organized and we have no reason to think it won't improve and change with time. There may be a need for two workshops if we grow to eighty people which is certainly possible. With the

potential of being certified in many other weapons, who knows where we will be ten years from now. The NSCW is currently one of the most highly recognized summer programs in the country. How many other areas of theatre bring this many highly visible and respected artists together to share their knowledge? I encourage you to plan way ahead if you are considering attending next year's workshop. Many of you are coming back two and even three times so you can study the same weapon under the guidance of a different Fight Master. I am sure you have heard the old saying..."All good teachers are currently students themselves."

Candidates for assistants at the National Workshop are considered in the following priority:

1. Current Certified Teachers and Associate members in good standing.
2. Current Actor/Combatants in good standing.

Send a letter of interest and resume, detailing training and list of teaching and/or choreographic credits to me at:

35 West 45th St.  
Suite 600  
New York, New York 10036  
**David Leong**

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

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

Applications for change in status within the Society should be addressed to Drew Francher, c/o Abiding Grace Farms, 780 Bushtown Road, Harrodsburg, KY 40330

Articles for consideration in *The Fight Master* should be submitted to the editor, Linda McCollum, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Nevada, 4505 Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, Nevada 89154

# SLAPSTICK IN THE COMMEDIA DELL' ARTE: PART II by Lloyd Caldwell

Very briefly I'd like to re-capitulate the information contained in the first part of this article appearing in the May issue of **The Fight Master**. This is for the benefit of those just joining us and as a reminder of the context in which we will examine slapstick. In the last discussion I outlined in abbreviated form the origins, development, and principle characters of the commedia dell'arte. I then commented on the importance of slapstick to the commedia, but omitted any in-depth discussion of the slapstick lazzi. In this present article I'll attempt to fill in the details of slapstick as a comedic tool in the commedia dell'arte.<sup>1</sup>

Commedia dell'arte as a theatre form enjoyed wide popularity in the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Partially improvised and partially recited in the acting tradition, a commedia troupes travelled throughout Europe in search for new audiences. Count Carlo Gozzi, playwright and diarist of the eighteenth century renders a valuable account of the manner in which these troupes performed:

These plays were never withdrawn on account of illness among the actors or because of newly recruited talent. An impromptu parley before going on the stage, as regards both the plot and the way in which it is to be played, is sufficient to insure a smooth performance. It often happens that in special circumstances, or because of the relative importance and skill of certain actors, a change in the roles is made on the spur of the moment just as the curtain is going up. Yet the comedy is borne along to a gay and sprightly conclusion...

It is true that serious actors, and especially actresses, in this kind of comedy possess an extraordinary store of varied material which they exploit at will for pleas, reproaches, and moods of despair and jealousy. Yet, knowing this, it is none the less astonishing to see them improvising before the public and to observe how appropriately they select their material, always having the right quips ready and expressing them with such energy that they wring applause from the audience.<sup>2</sup>

The scenarii of the commedia dell'arte normally employ the elements of romance, intrigue, mistaken identity, and coarse buffoonery. The love interest, often the central theme of the play, involved the misadventures of the innamorati, two young lovers who performed unmasked and rarely took part in slapstick humor. The complication was provided by the interference and buffoonery of the zanni, the stock characters and the clowns of the commedia. There was Panteleone, who represented the "older generation," along with the Dottore, the pedantic school master and pseudo-intellectual. Capitano, the stage bully, also placed obstacles in the course of true love. The other characters we might

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this article I shall be using the Italian spelling of certain words and phrases, some of which may be familiar. As a simple reminder, Italian words end in masculine and feminine genders, -o and -a. The plural is often indicated by the -i suffix. This a collection of scenario, or story lines are called scenarii. The same with lazzo, lazzi, and so forth.

<sup>2</sup> Carlo Gozzi, Memoirs, in Pierre Duchartre's *The Italian Comedy*. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1966), pp. 33.

recognize more readily as the clown roles, though certainly they could and often did play a major part in the storyline. Pulcinella, Arlecchino, and Columbine are three examples of this latter group.

The training of a dell'arte performer took the traditional form of an apprenticeship. Details of the actors' training can be gleaned from the actors' zibaldoni, or working journals. Training in slapstick was done through observation and imitation. A young performer would join a troop for several seasons, observing the performers and incorporating himself into the performance. He or she would be assigned roles, or "masks," that best suited his or her particular talents. If the performer was physically beautiful, he might play the inameratto, or romantic male lead. If he were a gifted comedian, his role might be that of Panteleone. Once comfortable with a mask and the stage business associated with it, the performer might remain in the same role throughout his theatrical career.

The more agile members of the troupe were assigned the clown roles. The commedia troupes were justly famous for physical comedy and acrobatics. The plot often took devious twists and turns to accommodate a bravura performance of physical comedy. Of the more famous of these comedians-cum-acrobats was Tiberio Fiorilli (1604-1694), a renowned Scaramouche who could still administer a slap with his foot to another zanni's face at the venerable age of eighty three.<sup>3</sup>

These observations conclude our review of the material presented in Part I. It now remains for us to turn to the lazzi themselves to round out our discussion of slapstick in the commedia. Mel Gordon, in his book on the lazzi, has culled the existing manuscripts for representative scenes. The following excerpts from this work, augmented by several from Scala, are what I consider to be particularly significant for the student of slapstick. I take the liberty of condensing and paraphrasing these passages in the interest of brevity. For a more thorough treatment, see Gordon's work on Lazzi, and Scala's volume on Scenarios.<sup>4</sup>

#### Lazzi of the Ladder

These lazzi make use of a special stage property, the flexible ladder, and the unique acrobatic skills of the performer playing Arlecchino. The lazzi can be found in several scenarii. In one variation Arlecchino enters an orchard in order to steal some apples for his gluttonous master, Panteleone. While perched precariously atop the ladder, Arlecchino must cope with the nervous anxiety of his master, who fearing discovery is so unnerved that his shaking causes the entire ladder to shake.

A second variation is that of the tryst, where Arlecchino uses the ladder to reach his sweetheart's window. First the ladder slips as Arlecchino repeatedly tries to climb it. Then just as he mounts the last few rungs, his rival Brighella enters, shaking the ladder so that it sways sideways, depositing Arlecchino at the wrong window, that of ugly old La Ruffiana.

A final variation is that of the simultaneous entry and exit. Arlecchino climbs the ladder at Panteleone's request to enter the house unseen by

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<sup>3</sup> Tiberio Fiorilli's career is of considerable interest to theatre historians given his connection with the young Moliere and the mergence of the Comedie Francaise. See Pierre Louis Duchartre's The Italian Comedy, pp. 96-101 and 237-247.

<sup>4</sup> Mel Gordon, p. 10-65, and Flaminio Scala, Scenarios of the Commedia dell' Arte, trans. Henry F. Salerno (Durham: Duke University Press, 1967). Also Leas, p. 65-70, 561-674, and Oreglia's short volume on the Commedia.

Panteleone's wife. Arlecchino dives from the top rung into the second story window only to come barreling out the front door immediately afterwards. This effect required gymnastic ability similar to executing a "giant" maneuver on the modern high bar, whereby the performer grasps a horizontal bar inside the false front of the "house" above the door lintel and uses it to somersault himself through the door below.

#### Lazzi of Falling

This lazzi could refer to the prat fall of any character, though there were certain specific variations that bore the name. One such is the fall from a ladder resulting from being shot, pushed, shoved, or shaken. Needless to say this required a certain skill in tumbling to execute safely.

#### Lazzi of Binding Them

Arlecchino and Bertolino are tied back to back, a bowl of food for each placed at their feet. Their assailants then leave the stage. As one bends over to eat, the other is lifted into the air. This lazzi required great strength and balance. The slapstick routines seen so often on television employing a tied pair of performers are variations of this lazzi.

#### Lazzi of the Foot

Scaramouche uses his foot to slap another zanni, or to slap himself. The latter was the trade mark of the popular Scaramouche, Tiberio Fiorilli (1604 or 1608 to 1694)..

#### Somersault Lazzo

Arlecchino bounces from one character to another in somersaults somewhat in the manner of our modern pinball. As he does so each character in turn strikes or kicks him in some way.

#### Lazzo of the Hands Behind the Back

Scaramouche enters in search of Arlecchino, whom he intends to stab for some imagined slap, but Arlecchino outwits him. Sneaking up behind Scaramouche, he places his arms around his persecutor, giving Scaramouche an "extra" pair of hands. In this manner Arlecchino slaps Scaramouche and abuses him in various ways. When Columbine enters, Scaramouche attempts to court her, Arlecchino providing appropriate gestures with the "extra" pair of arms. He even plays Scaramouche's guitar as the latter serenades Columbine. Of course Scaramouche eventually discovers that he hasn't four arms, whirls about, and chases Arlecchino off the stage.

#### Lazzo of the Tooth Extractor

Arlecchino impersonates a Dentist in order to take revenge on his master Panteleone. He seats Panteleone in the chair, then produces various oversized instruments and proceeds to torment the old fool. Some might recognize this lazzi in the ever popular Dentist Sketch of Vaudeville and early television.

#### Lazzo of the Innocent Bystander

Arlecchino and Pedrolino are rivals for the favors of Columbine. They enter from opposite sides of the stage, armed to the teeth with every manner of weapon. They share a comic exchange of insults, and just before blows are struck the Capitano enters. Officious Braggart that he is, he insists on taking charge of the duel. He rushes between them, only to be beaten by both.

#### Lazzi of the Cuff

This is a lazzi of the bigger fish eating the smaller fish. Flaminia and Aurelia argue, concluding when Flaminia hits the smaller Aurelia. Panteleone, wandering by at that moment, gets hit by Aurelia in turn. Coviello is then hit by Panteleone, who hits Lelio in turn, etc. This scene should be familiar to students of Moliere.

#### Lazzo of His Beating Father

Zannilet, played by a grown performer, is the infant son of Panteleone. Crying with hunger, he beats his father with an outsized rattle. Panteleone, illustrating the lesson to his son that it is not polite to hit anyone, repeatedly strikes the servant Arlecchino to illustrate his point.

#### Lazzo of Counting

Arlecchino is sentenced to be flogged ten lashes for stealing macaroni. The Capitano administers the punishment, but every time he begins he loses count and must begin again. Arlecchino, who is equally inept at figures, cannot help himself by keeping the count straight.

#### Lazzo of Being Brained

Food was a preoccupation of the zanni. Their ravenous hunger provided the premise of much of the slapstick lazzi. One such is the lazzi of being brained. Arlecchino is hit so hard on the head that his brains start to come out. Afraid of "losing his mind," Arlecchino begins to eat his own brains. This effect was created by concealing a bowl of oatmeal or other such foodstuff under his cap.

#### Lazzo of the Bladder

Inflated pig bladders were a common stage property in medieval drama. Sometimes they were used as harmless "weapons" to beat zanni over the head. These bladders were quite elastic and hardy, and could be used in the manner of rubber balloons, which of course did not make their appearance historically until much later. A novel use for the bladder was the Lazzo of the Bladder. Arlecchino falls backwards and bounces back up due to inflated pig bladders tied around his waist. Repeated several times, the shtick was terminated when the performer caused one of the bladders to burst with the loud, comic sound of breaking wind.

#### Lazzo of the Gunshot

An assassin fires a gun at his victim, who walks away unscathed. When the smoke clears the killer realized he forgot to load a bullet. This is but one of many lazzi utilizing the new firearms of the period. Its novelty and the noise and smoke of its discharge made the firearm a popular stage property.

#### Lazzo of the Enema

Physical humor concerned with bodily functions was very popular with commedia audiences. One such lazzo dealt with the administration of an enema, a common purgative of the time. Contemporary woodcuts depict the administration of an enema to Panteleone utilizing a huge syringe-like instrument. The appeal of such a sketch might be limited for modern audience.

#### Lazzo of Getting through a Brick Wall

Arlecchino dives through a brick wall. This illusion was effected by using an identically dress Arlecchino concealed in a "hollow" wall.

### Lazzo of the Lunatic

Mental illness was little understood in the days before Freud. Afflicted members of society were often kept at home by relatives, their irregularities on the whole tolerated. Only the truly violent or socially "inconvenient" were committed to the jail and the convent. This attitude toward the insane provided the basis for the Lazzo of the Lunatic. Pulcinella pretends he is mad in order to beat others or to court his sweetheart in front of her husband, thus taking advantage of madness to flaunt convention.

### Lazzo of the Shoe

Pulcinella escapes two guards by pretending to tie his shoe. Bending down, he grabs an ankle of each guard and trips them, making his escape.

### Lazzo of the Living Corpse

Arlecchino, thinking his fellow servant Trivellino dead, straddles him with his face towards Trivellino's feet in order to drag the "corpse" away. Trivellino takes Arlecchino's bat from out of his belt and slaps Arlecchino in the rump. Arlecchino is of course mystified by this, knowing no one else is near except the "corpse." He then picks Trivellino up by grabbing the "stiff" under the arms; he walks stage left and leans the "corpse" against the wings while he catches his breath. Trivellino sneaks to the other side of the stage while Arlecchino isn't looking and leans against the opposite wing in the same position. And so forth.

It seems the best of the slapstick retains a timeless quality. The above lazzi, with one or two exceptions, should be familiar to us; we've seen the same "gags" countless times. These bits appear repeatedly in the works of Chaplin, Keaton, Zero Mostel, Red Skelton--all of our beloved funny men. In this respect the lazzi of the commedia dell'arte, as recorded in the zibaldoni of individual players and the collections of scenarios, are of considerable interest to the modern slapstick performer.

What factors contributed to the enduring success of the slapstick in commedia? Remember that the commedia held the stage for well over three centuries, and is currently undergoing a limited resurgence in popularity both here and in Italy. What is more, the commedia dell'arte brand of slapstick humor is with us today in our sitcoms and the like. Why should this be so? Are there lessons to be learned from the commedia we have so far overlooked?

The evolution of stock characters in the commedia dell'arte, and the costumes that became their physical manifestation, served to enhance what is known as the "critical distance." Physical comedy relies on a critical distance to keep the audience from empathizing with the victim; in other words, it maintains a "distance from reality" that allows the audience to laugh at what might otherwise be tragic or cause for alarm. This might be maintained through a total illusion, Punch and Judy being an example, or it might exist in the slimmest of safety margins. A commedia performer might attempt an acrobatic stunt of daring proportions which seemingly puts his safety at risk, but through personal skill is overcome. The release of the tension following the somersault causes gales of laughter in the audience. The genesis of this effect is somewhat too complicated to cover fully in the present study. A more in-depth discussion of this "tension" in performance can be found in both Beckerman's and Blistein's works.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> An interesting study of tension in performance can be found in Bernard Beckerman's Dynamics of Drama, (New York: Drama Book Specialists, 1970), pp. 49-51. See also Elmer Blistein, Comedy in Action, (Durham: Duke University Press, 1964), pp. 42-77.

Conversely, the failure to maintain this "critical distance" in the performance of slapstick can have a devastating impact on the performance. How many of us have gasped at witnessing an onstage accident that obviously injured a performer? The effect of such an accident on the audience is immediate and profound, justly ruining the entertainment value of the event. So too can be the effect of a "stunt" of too realistic proportions, which can enlist our empathy for the victim and turn the moment from comic to dramatic.

The use of stock characters in the role of traditional butt of slapstick made the violence done them more acceptable to the audiences. The convention enabled the audience to partake in the performance. Pulcinella and his compatriots were conceived and remained, over time, the comic brunt of slapstick. No sooner had the baggy white suit and sugar-loaf hat of Pulchinella appeared on stage than the audience knew a comic beating was in the offing. Indeed, they would have been sorely disappointed had one not occurred. Further, the anticipation of laughter caused by the entrance of a well-known comic character heightened the hilarity of the performance.

Physical appearance was of primary importance to the commedia in establishing and re-enforcing the distancing effect. The costume and mask of the commedia character came to symbolize the form as much as the improvisational technique of the performers. Who does not recognize Arlecchino in the parti-colored body suit of diamond motif, the dark mask and bat? The appearance of these characters on stage established an expectation from the audience of comedy to follow.

One of the most important costume properties in commedia was the half-mask. The facial half-mask came over the years to be a social convention among the high-born in those haunts where they wished to remain anonymous. These half masks were dark, of hardened linen or leather, with normally proportioned features. The masks employed in the commedia dell'arte, on the other hand, invariably sported a large nose and other such ridiculous distortions. All zanni with the exception of Columbine performed in comic mask, creating a distance between the performer's individual identity and that of the character he portrayed. A painful mishap occurring to Pedrolino, notorious for his comic awkwardness, is much less disturbing than a mishap occurring to a performer we might recognize as an individual. Even if something should go amiss, the mask would cover most of the facial contortions accompanying human pain.

Later performers gradually relinquished the mask, the great Grimaldi among them, replacing it with the comic facial contortions familiar to audiences of modern circus and vaudeville clowns. The comic grimace retained the same effect as that of the mask, distancing the audience from the pain of the comic victim.

The costumes of the commedia were adapted from everyday dress, just as the masks had been, but were distorted in silhouette and made more colorful. The costume of Arlecchino was derived from the rags worn by the beggars of Italy. Over time the costume became stylized, the rags becoming patches, the patches transforming into the diamond motif. As another example, the long black cloak and tight-fitting scarlet suit of Panteleone evolved from the merchants' garb of Naples and Florence.

These costumes were strikingly colorful and fitted so as to accentuate a particular physical trait of the character. The tight breeches and short jacket of Arlecchino and Brighella were best suited to their acrobatic roles. Panteleone's tight jacket underneath the flowing cloak emphasized his bulging pot-belly. The baggy clothes of Pulcinella originally were designed to give room to his humped back, though this feature faded as Pulcinella progressed from the comic cripple to the bumbling servant. As with the masks, the costumes placed the individual's identity at one remove from the character, their festive colors and distorted silhouettes re-enforcing the critical distance.

Even the stage properties were stylized to re-enforce the "critical distance" between illusion and reality. The slapstick, several pieces of board connected at the handle and designed to create the maximum noise with the minimum injury to the victim, became the perfect comic weapon with which to administer a beating. Indeed, it gave its name to comic violence. Other stage properties were equally stylized and rendered harmless. The flexible ladder and inflated pig bladder we became acquainted with in the lazzi cited above, but there were many other such properties used by the various troupes. The effect sought was maximum safety for the performer, and maximum comic effect upon the audience.

I have spent much time on this "critical distance" as it pertained to the commedia dell'arte. Does it have any application for us today? Of course it does. The emphasis now, however, is less on stylized costume and more on stock character and approved stage combat technique.

The sit-com of television is now the primary residence of slapstick. John Ritter, performing in **Three's Company**, is as good an example as any of the modern slapstick comedian. One might say a primary factor in the show's popularity, aside from the obvious charms of the female leads, was the prat falls of Mr. Ritter. Here were no slapsticks or pig bladders. Rather, the comedy resulted from simple collisions between Mr. Ritter and various inanimate objects. The "knaps" on the sound track were dubbed in, the on-camera blows masked in some way; all are commonly practiced stage combat techniques. Where **Three's Company** and the commedia cross paths are in the stock characters. The vacuous blonde can be traced to the innamorata, the dizzy brunette to Columbine. Mr. Ritter, in his proclivity for accidents and his eternal lecherous pursuits, combines the best of Arlecchino, Pierrot, and Pulcinella.

There are endless examples and parallels between the commedia dell'arte and our own time. For the present, however, we must conclude this brief introduction to slapstick in the commedia dell'arte. The subject is a broad one, and no doubt would yield some valuable finds. I hope that in presenting this material in abbreviated form it will be of some use to the modern fight choreographer, and perhaps serve as a goad for further research in the area. After all, in the performance of slapstick we are all sons and daughter of Harlequin.

The following is a limited Bibliography of titles one might wish to consult on the commedia dell'arte and its origins. I have placed asterisks next to publications which I found were most rich in information. In addition there are the collections of documents concerning the commedia not readily available to students in the U.S. I include them should the reader at some point have the opportunity of consulting them in person.

Concerning lazzi:

Basilio Locatelli manuscripts, circa 1618 and 1622                      respectively, Biblioteca Casacatense, Rome.

Pietro Maria Cecchini, Frutti delle moderne comedie et avisi a chi le recita, circa 1628, quoted in part in Lea, below.

Notes of Giovan Domenico Biancolelli, circa 1688, Bibliotheque de l'Opera, Paris.

Corsiniana Collection, Academia dei Lincei, Rome.

Ciro Monarca Collection, Biblioteca Cascatense, Rome.

Modena Collection of the Este Library, Modena State Archive.

Collections in the Vatican Library.

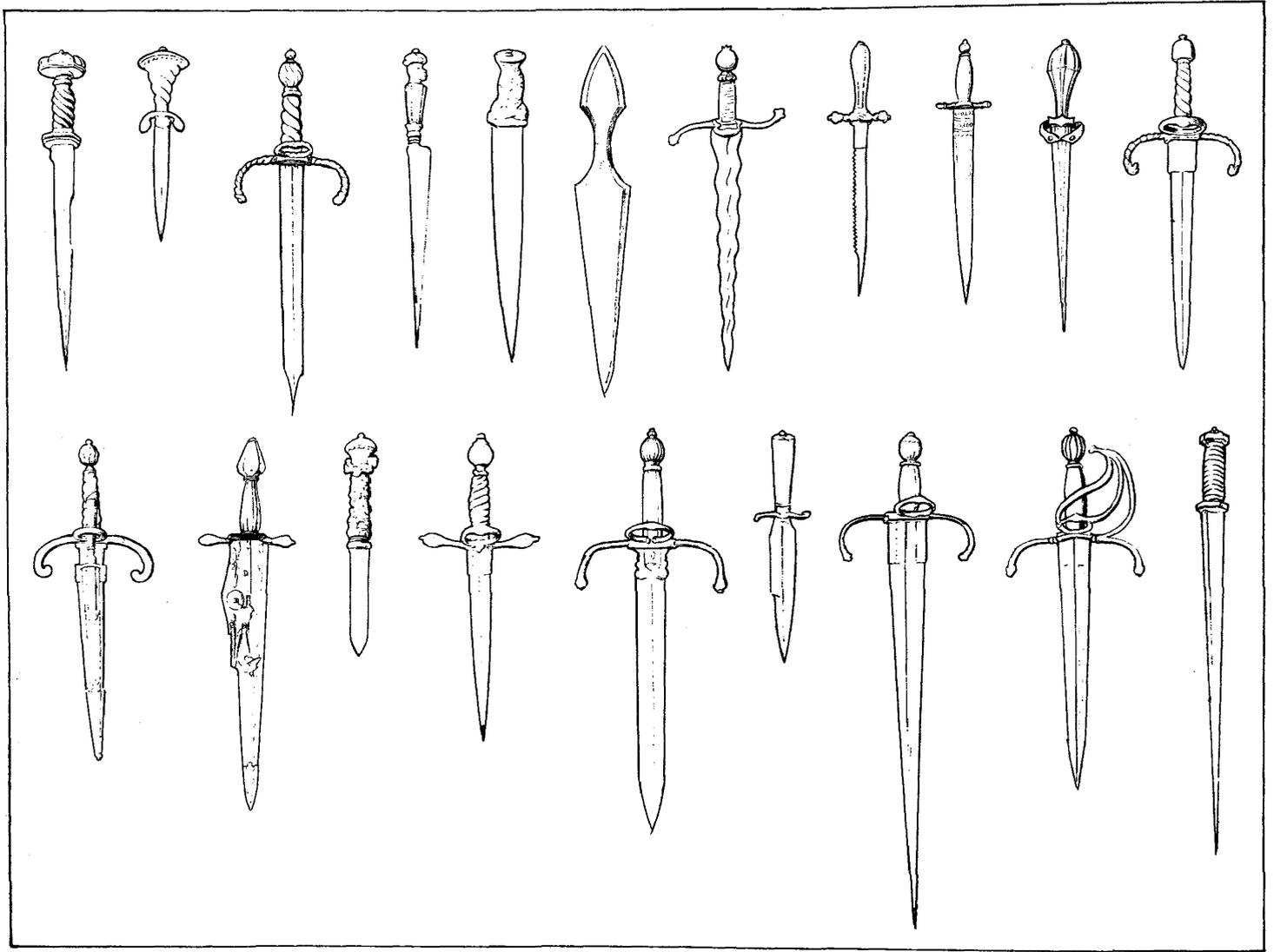
Museo Correr Collection, Venice.

Father Placido Adriani Collection, Biblioteca Comunale of Perugia.

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Thirteenth and Fourteenth Century English daggers. *Ancient Armor*

## A SWORD AND SORCERY SPECTACULAR

by Greg Michaels

*(Greg is one of a handful of original cast members who is still performing in Universal Studios Tours production of "Conan the Barbarian--a Sword and Sorcery Spectacular." Greg teaches and choreographs swordplay. In addition to a wide knowledge of the history of Western weapons, Greg has fought and/or choreographed nearly two dozen theatrical productions ranging from Off-Broadway to the Mark Taper Forum in Los Angeles).*

The idea for the Conan show was brought to Universal Studio Tours by Gary Goddard, Tony Christopher and Laurel Van der Linde (all of whom would later form Landmark Productions). They would co-produce and direct the twenty minute spectacular with a producer and staff from Universal. Landmark's concept for the six million dollar show was "A movie come to life before the audience's eyes." Basically this meant that state of the art special effects for film would be utilized for a live theatre production. The major special effects would include: a "curtain" of rain to begin and end each show; various laser beams; pyrotechnical explosions; a miraculous transformation of Young Conan into Conan the Barbarian using a small elevator and jets of carbon dioxide to camouflage the actors' change; bursts of flame from the "hell-pit;" actor entrances from thrones which would appear to "revive them from the dead"--using smoke, lasers and specially constructed thrones; and finally, an eighteen foot electronic dragon which would be life-like as well as breathe real fire and belch lasers. Needless to say, the technical director of the show would have his hands full--even with the use of a computer which would eventually run the show. Truly, it would appear to the audience that magical and miraculous events were taking place before their very eyes.

As in the film, original music was scored to heighten dramatic moments or highlight actors' dialogue. The score's vivid, "classical" music arranged and conducted by the London Philharmonic Orchestra adds considerably to the Conan production.

And, of course, there had to be a sword fight in the show. The Fight Director, Lanny Broyles, was an experienced stage choreographer who had spent a number of weeks choreographing and preparing a demonstration-only cast for his imaginative fight. The fight, originally choreographed at five minutes, would eventually be distilled to three minutes and placed about two-thirds of the way into the production.

The first auditions for the Conan spectacular were held in April 1983 on a huge Universal Studio soundstage. Depending on who you believe, the number of auditionees was estimated as high as fifteen hundred. The most conservative estimate was nine hundred men and women who hoped to fill three regular casts and one substitute cast.

All roles in each cast would deal with weapons and/or special effects in some way. Three of the roles in each cast were mostly acting roles--Young Conan, Kallias the Good Wizard, and the evil Taras Mordar (who performed a sixteen foot highfall into the hell-pit). The other six actor/combatant roles (and their respective weapons) were as follows: Conan (broadsword and shield); Red Sonja (short sword); Khobad Shah (broadsword in each hand); Azura (mace and axe); Balash (kwando); Zamor (a seven-foot actor to wield a five foot broadsword).

At first the auditions were "inspiring" since the specialized talents were awesome. By the third callback the auditions were nervewracking.

Fortunately at the time the auditions were held I had been involved in stage fighting and combat for several years. And I thank the Great Warrior in the Sky that Rod Colbin, one of my former Masters, had taught me so thoroughly and professionally. Also, a year earlier, Jim Dalesandro (a fellow actor/fighter) and I had formed a Fight Directing partnership, so by the fourth Conan callback, we were able to perform our own broadsword duel.

After the final callbacks, after hundreds of auditionees had been told "no thank-you," and after my nerves were in shreds--Jim and I both had been selected as two of the thirty-six cast members! We were each chosen to play the role of Khobad Shah, the Double Swordsman (each in a different cast of course). I remember being too bedraggled to be able to cheer.

Then the rehearsal period began. What I remember about the rehearsals was that they began at six in the morning, we had ninety degree mid-day temperatures in the rehearsal tent, we were always behind on production schedules, and I had an odd feeling in the pit of my stomach when the two hundred sixty pound Conans swung a sword at my head. We had six weeks to train and rehearse, and the situation seemed to foster a fair amount of competition among casts and cast members which Universal did not seem to discourage. And even with six weeks of rehearsals there were so many elements to pull together that when the combatants were actually put on the Conan set, they actually seemed unprepared.

The actual Conan performing space was a gigantic set built around a more-or-less proscenium stage. To give you the scope, the set is housed in a twenty five hundred seat amphitheatre. The set was mostly rehearsal ready for four casts in the final week. Onstage time was extremely precious and every moment that week had urgency!

It was during that last week that each actor/combatant was presented with his or her costume. For the Double Swordsman this meant loose culotte-type pants, knee-length boots, a breast plate and shoulder pads constructed from light weight materials, a large cape, and a helmet with horns spiraling from the top.

The fight itself was basically Conan and Red Sonja against four Warriors. Of course, there were many complex fight sequences so you can imagine how many weapons were flying at any given instant. The fighters in our cast were asked to dress in their costumes. This was only the second rehearsal of the cast on the Conan set and we were being asked to put on our new costumes for a full fight run-through.

The fight began. To make a long story short, during one of my choreographed moves, my weapons caught in my twirling cape and carried it over my face and helmet. At this exact instant, Red Sonja rolled forty five degrees instead of her prescribed ninety degrees and wound up with one of my broadsword points right between the eyes. I recall, as the fight skidded to a halt, a feeling of having swallowed a hot tennis ball.

Rod Colbin says that "there is no such thing as an accident--but there are foolish actors, egotistical actors, macho actors...." In this case, I was foolish to agree to go onstage ill prepared. After that particular rehearsal I insisted we dispose of the cape and helmet for obvious reasons. After a lengthy discussion the Powers-that-be agreed. Cast safety again became a priority even amid the urgency of the schedule.

I might add that fortunately my blades had not even drawn blood from Red Sonja; she lived to fight many more times. I am also happy to report that for the last four years luck and experience have been my companions and I have never seriously injured a fellow fighter.

Other trials for us combatants would follow during that last week prior to opening. The most harrowing trial was "matching the fight with the soundtrack in the new space. That is, certain parts of the score were written to crescendo at certain moments in the fight. Needless to say, this creates some special problems for the fighters, not the least of which is timing and teamwork.

The biggest difference between this fight and other theatre productions is the astonishing number of fights done each day and each year. During peak holiday seasons, one cast may perform as many as six shows during a five hour shift. Last summer the Aquilonian cast captured the record by performing nine shows in less than seven hours! Anyone who has ever fought on stage will tell you that even a single two minute bout is physically and mentally demanding.

Since the beginning of the Conan production four years ago, I would say there have been about ten thousand fights. I myself have probably performed the Double Swordsman about five thousand times. As far as I know, there has never been a live swordfight in the history of theatre that has been performed this often.

Another accepted fact of life in the Conan production is "free substitutions." One of the traditional perks of the job is that a cast member is permitted to call in a substitute at almost any time. What sometimes happens, therefore, is that I may be fighting one Conan for the first two shows of the day, and then another Conan for the last two. And there may be several cast substitutions during the course of the day. Naturally we do a walk-through rehearsal when a substitute arrives, but inevitably there are timing problems and even fight interpretation problems. It is to Universal's credit that they have now established numerous rehearsals for all substitute fighters and set up other guidelines to insure more safety. This is no easy task when you consider the large number of cast members, all performing in a long, long run.

And speaking of Universal Studios, it is, after all, a large corporate business. As such the corporate beast does not always respond quickly or even appropriately to production and actor problems in spite of good intentions. And believe me, there can be problems. I don't want to give the impression that the Conan show is an accident waiting to happen, but, on a given day, any or all of these things may occur: wet stage from faulty rain curtain; metal slivers from weapons in actors' eyes; pyro burns to actors; vast amount of onstage smoke; weapons accidentally flying into the audience; slippery stage from pyro dust; "climb-rope" unravelling or breaking; microphone problems; transformation elevator not working; weapons breaking while fighting; electronic dragon belching too much fire, or fire aimed off-target; non working lasers; dragon not appearing at all due to mechanical failure. See the complexity? And don't forget as in any production there is the possibility of human error.

Obviously Conan is very physical and every actor in the show shares risks. Nobody has escaped bruises and batterings. There have been many stitches. And there have also been a number of self-sustained injuries such as a muscle pull, serious knee injuries and the like. There were two actors who each had a finger seriously damaged and one combatant in the opening week of the show had his brow and cheek severely cut. However considering the number of fights performed during the run of this production I am glad to say that to the credit of the cast members there has never been a "major" accident. (I define "major" as a head or eye injury).

And, of all the actor/combatants who have performed in the show, there was only one fighter who consistently injured his fellows. I feel that

though this actor was skilled in performance, he cultivated a daredevil mentality, not a stuntman's attitude. Universal finally relieved him of his position.

All-in-all, considering the astounding number of shows and the sometimes ridiculous onstage conditions I truly believe the safety record is to be commended.

The Conan show is fun onstage and off, physically exhausting, political, rewarding, risky, and mentally frustrating. Probably the most difficult element I haven't even mentioned is keeping your fight performance "fresh" after such a long run.

Yes the show has evolved quite a bit since its beginning four years ago. I suppose in many ways the show has been watered down as most long running productions are by too many cooks in the kitchen. Yes, things have changed...everything from different weapons for some warriors to taped dialogue for certain acting roles. Even the number of characters has diminished. The seven-foot Zamor warrior was written out of the fight and Young Conan and Balash were combined so that one actor, by making an extremely quick change, can play both roles. As I mentioned, the fight has been re-choreographed a number of times and even some of the special effects have been changed or disposed of. Yet the Conan spectacular is still consistently rated the number one show at Universal Studios Tours and indeed the number one show in all theme parks in America. And I am still glad to be associated with the show.

## Dangerous Game by Todd Tjaden

Growling "War!", the master of **Les Liaisons Dangereuses** backs her hopeless opponent into death. The tri-color falls, dawn mist crawls in, and the decadent Valmont slides full through the metal erection of transition rapier.

Coming away from a performance of this strange, perceptive play by Christopher Hampton (the Royal Shakespeare Company, at the Music Box in New York), I feel quite comfortable with such 'precious' metaphor. The play is precious and is certainly a metaphor; somewhat sleazily obvious, like layers of caked, unwashed make-up. And the climactic tour de force duel is an odd metaphoric beauty mark; it explicates theme and character with a black focus.

Superficially, the play is about two former lovers trapped in a deadly game of passion and revenge. More profoundly, the play is the game (or vice versa). And the game is combat. This 'game' embodies basic elements of personal/societal combat: an initial ennui and the desperate need for stimulation, territoriality, lust for power and control, desire for conquest/domination, need of the 'hunt,' risk and danger...death, et al.

As a microcosm of the 'game' (and the play), the duel is languorous. Its movements are slow and sensuous--almost deliberate--betraying a lack of spontaneity. It has a certain 'planned' look, as though it had been conceived during long hours of wistful, yawning idleness. After all, the combatants are of the ruling class--they yearn for something beyond the "everything" they already possess. Despite the 1780's setting, this is all very modern; a jaded society pushing itself to the edge in search of new excitement/stimulation. Death (drugs, war, nuclear destruction) as the ultimate titillation. Three times, Valmont sensuously approaches his opponent's blade full on--arms open, his own weapon drooping--knowing well that the hammer is drawn, but not knowing when the kill will come. It's a sick dare towards the unknown. But what of that? For these combatants, the guillotine is just down the road--and they know it. This game, this duel of languor, reveals the rush to suicide by a society sensing its own impending murder.

Le Vicomte de Valmont is a succulent. He expresses some of the finer evil qualities of the world: lust, decadence, narcissism. He is a powerful, charismatic gamesman. However, he is still only the subservient male counterpoint to the master of the game, La Marquise de Merteuil. She is Valmont's true opponent in this duel. Though Le Chevalier Danceny holds the weapon, he is only La Marquise's creature. She directs this duel. Its style and movement patterns are decidedly feminine.

This duel is a lioness, rubbing her scent on the combatants. There is a roundness and a deceiving softness to the action--a certain feminine muscularity. Territory is defined with the stalking subtlety of this woman, La Marquise. And the territory is

quite clearly her bed. The movement patterns suggest Valmont's continuing attempts to enter her boudoir, to 'die' in her arms. The literal crossing of weapons is a natural punctuation to the figurative duel between these two perverse lovers--they have struggled for control of each other for so long.

For Valmont, the duel is his last stand. He knows that La Marquise now owns his life. His movements are feminine--he is now also her creature. But, this is a final affirmation of his ability to at least control his own end--not just passively watch it happen. The length, timing, and body positions of the combat are determined by him. He makes his particular voyeurism a complete act of self-definition. His defenseless approaches to Danceny's blade are the terminal experience of thrill-seeking voyeurism: he watches, directs, and participates, simultaneously. He has total control of his personal voyeuristic situation. Despite La Marquise's comments to the contrary, he proves that his watching is doing.

The duel is also Valmont's victory in 'wit.' The play is a construction of Restoration-type 'wit,' in narrative, character, dialogue style, and syntax/semantics. Indeed, the play is narcissistic about its 'wit.' Hence, the play's 'precious' quality (however, the use of 'wit' here is obviously a very calculated twentieth century commentary). The duel is a physical replication of stalking, verbal wit. Valmont slides toward Danceny, weapon down, seemingly distracted and unfocused. Then, there is the sudden slap of Danceny's rapier. This sudden, unexpected challenge is equivalent to the surprise punctuation and verbal thrust of 'wit.' It's like a double-entendre or a clever turn of phrase.

For La Marquise, the duel is her final conquest/domination over Valmont and over all men. Her physical lover (Danceny) kills her intellectual lover (Valmont). And Valmont allows this to happen, allows himself to be a participant in this genocide. This is all a very modern nineteenth century/twentieth century 'battle of the sexes.' Valmont is the self-aware Strindberg male martyr. Even de Tourvel's emotional ruin is, finally, domination of Valmont by Woman. Though in love with de Tourvel, he dies, willingly, at the hand of another predatory woman (and, figuratively, at de Tourvel's hand as well). He dies professing his love for de Tourvel, but dies because of his lust for La Marquise. Therefore, he is killed by two women (at least; I won't even touch upon his relationship with the young babe, Cecile).

This is really a woman's play. In fact, it is almost militaristically feminist. Valmont's death could be termed an execution, especially in light of La Marquise's callous use of all the men around her. She is emotionally unavailable. Conversely, Valmont does fall in love. He winds up surprisingly noble, almost sympathetic. After all, we love to love a lover. But La Marquise? No. She lusts only for the game and her conquest of men. It is her play. From the first, we know where Valmont is headed; his end is unsurprising. But, La Marquise does change. At play's conclusion, the game has turned serious. And she begins to realize that it's no longer a game. She carries the last scene, and the final line of the

play is hers: "...the game must continue." It is a stunning moment. She continues to speak of the game while Valmont's dead body lies inches away. She knows that it will never be the same again. What a truly evil thing she is.

Of course, it is the duel which turns the lightly intriguing (even comic) action of the game to something quite deadly. Throughout the play, the players move deftly, with an eye as much toward style and grace as towards intention ('wit,' once again). It all has a rather unreal, 'costume' feel--almost surreal, like the drowsy daydreams of having plenty of money and time to spend it. One has the sense of watching a 'period' movie, photographed through a very soft filter late in the day. At first, the duel does nothing to dispel this sensation. It seems to be an extension of the dream-game; all sensuous, insincere feints between two pretty men in pretty clothes; all wit, no substance.

But then the killing zone is entered. And we gasp. Coming from such a surreal context, the fatal thrust is so unexpected. It's so sudden and so well executed that its effect is jarring and utterly convincing. Do we see blood? Though we know the blade actually slides a harmless path under an armpit, it still preys on persistence of vision. Like seeing a bad car accident on a beautiful day--it jams us from A to Z and back to A again. Death is real. These people are real. They play for keeps.

This sudden rapier thrust is certainly the end of the game. The end of ennui. The end of a culture and of an era. La Marquise plays the game that ends in nothing. It goes nowhere but the end. It is the ultimate dangerous association.

## **EXOTIC WEAPONS**

**by Drew Fracher**

The following is a listing of weapons suppliers and manufacturers compiled by a technician friend of mine who specializes in props. Many of these are not necessarily of combat quality, but the list may nevertheless be useful to you at some point in time as a reference or supply list for theatres you may be working in. All of these addresses were current as of January 1986.

### **Exotic Weapons: An Access Book**

copyright 1982 by Michael Hoy  
Published by Loompanics Unlimited  
P.O. Box 1197  
Port Townsend, Washington 98368

### **SWORD CANES**

Green Service  
P.O. Box 3042  
Rosedale, Kansas 66103  
(816) 221-2581

Guardian Cane Company  
Caller Box 310  
Kansas City, Missouri 64141

Morris Lawing  
150 Garland Court  
Charlotte, North Carolina 28208  
Catalog: \$1.00

### **WHIPS**

Cobra Bullwhips  
915 Glenway  
St. Louis, Missouri 63122

The Emporium  
P.O. Box 6396  
Wheeling, West Virginia 26003  
Catalog: \$1.00

Glen-Bel Enterprises  
Route 5  
Crossville, Tennessee 38555  
(615) 788-5568

Nasco  
901 Janesville Ave.  
Fort Atkinson, Wisconsin 53538  
(414) 563-2446

J.V. Wilson Leather Company  
Star Route Box 2  
Bellefontaine, Mississippi 39737  
(601) 258-7442

## **SWORDS**

Adventure Centers  
7831 Delmont  
St. Louis, Missouri 63123  
(314) 351-2059

CJM Arms/The Muller Co., Ltd.  
D-25 Rincon Valley  
Vail, Arizona 85641  
Catalog: \$1.00

Collectors Armoury, Inc.  
800 Status Lane  
Box 1061 Dept. PR091  
Alexandria, Virginia 22313  
(703) 549-0772  
Catalog: \$2.00

East West Markets Exchange  
55 N. Broadway  
Chicago, Illinois 60604  
(312) 878-7711

William Fagen & Company  
Box 425  
Fraser, MI 48026  
(313) 465-5637  
Catalog: \$3.00 for three issues

Imperial Martial Arts Supply  
3004 Buffalo Road  
Erie, Pennsylvania 16510  
(814) 899-6633  
Catalog: \$1.00

Kim Pacific Trading Corp. Inc.  
1451 Doolittle Drive  
San Leandro, California 94577  
(415) 430-0101

Kinji San Imports  
3010 Avenue M  
Brooklyn, New York 11210  
Catalog: Three twenty-two cent stamps

Hartnin J. Lahr  
544 Route 112  
North Patchogue, New York 11772

Daryl Meier Blacksmith Shop  
RR #4  
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

Mitchell Mogal, Inc.  
440 Broadway  
New York, New York 10013  
(212) 226-8278

The Museum of Historical Arms  
P.O. Box 390898  
Miami, Florida 33119  
Catalog: \$5.00

Nozawa Trading, Inc.  
870 Western Ave.  
Los Angeles, California 90005  
(213) 385-7096

The Sportsman's Guide  
1415 Fifth St. South  
Hopkins Minnesota 55343  
(613) 933-3050

Taipan  
4040 W. Chandler St.  
Santa Ana, California 92704  
(714) 540-2332

Timberwolf Cutlery  
P.O. Box 757  
Clanton, Alabama 35045  
(800) 633-4266

U.S. Cavalry Store, Inc.  
1375 North Wilson Road  
Radcliff, Kentucky 40160

Valoor-Hi Adventure Sports Shop  
3603 Brownsville Road  
Pittsburg, PA 15227  
(412) 884-1333

World Wide Arms, Ltd.  
P.O. Bos 194  
Redding, CT 06875  
(203) 748-2077

## **MEDIEVAL, ANCIENT AND OLD-TIME WEAPONS**

(Many of these are also contained under the previous heading. The following seem to specialize in older periods)

Authentic Reproductions  
5317 Broadwater Lane  
Clarksville, Missouri 21029  
Catalog: \$1.00

N. Flayderman & Company, Inc.  
New Milford, Connecticut 06776  
(203) 354-5567

Green River Forge, Ltd.  
P.O. Box 715  
Roosevelt, Utah 84066  
Catalog: \$3.00

K.C. Sports, Inc.  
431 East 47 St.  
Chicago, Illinois 61653  
(312) 536-0500  
Catalog: \$1.00

Michael Engineering Company  
4999 South Crawford  
Mt. Pleasant, Michigan 48858

## **THEATRICAL FIGHTING QUALITY SWORDS, ETC.**

Rod Casteel Colonial Armoury  
106 Lynnbrook  
Eugene, Oregon 97404  
(503) 688-0607

Dennis Graves, Swordcutler  
255 South 41st St.  
Boulder, Colorado 80303  
(303) 494-4685

Eiler Robert Cook  
P.O. Box 188  
Etowah, North Carolina 28729  
(704) 692-0323

American Fencer Supply  
1180 Folsom St.  
San Francisco, California 94103  
(415) 863-7911

Triplette Competition Arms  
411 S. Main St.  
Mt. Airy, North Carolina 27030  
(919) 786-5294

### **QUARTERSTAVES**

Bamboo and Ratan Works  
Lakewood, New Jersey  
(201) 370-0220

# NATIONAL STAGE COMBAT WORKSHOP 1987

## by David Leong

This year's National Stage Combat Workshop, once again held on the campus of Memphis State University, was the most intensive and comprehensive in the eight years of its existence. From July 13th to 31st the three week event consisted of the usual instruction in the five basic weapons in addition to classes in sabre and katana, the annual SAFD meeting of officers and the newly added Teacher Certification Program. All in all, the workshop housed seven Fight Masters, six assistants, one guest artist and fifty one participants. Actors, directors, opera Teachers, fencing coaches, and the movement specialists made up the majority of people from every region of the country. It was especially nice to welcome back many people who had taken the workshop in the past years.

Each day began with a half hour warm up conducted in rotation by one of the assistants, followed by four one and a half hour classes split by a midday lunch break. The teachers, classes and assistants for the first week were as follows:

Drew Fracher	Quarterstaff	James Finney
Allen Suddeth	Courtsword	Jane Ridley
David Boushey	Broadsword	Mark Guinn
Joseph Martinez	Rapier/Dagger	Richard Raether

Evening seminars the first week consisted of workshops in preparing for the Certification Test Fight and teaching stage combat. J. R. Beardsley presented an exciting display of theatrical weaponry for sale through American Fencers Supply. Some of these were made available to him through Oscar Kolombatovich on a recent trip to Spain. Drew Fracher also displayed a line of weapons available from Rod Casteel of Colonial Armoury. John Elliott, also representing Rod, and Arthur Van Cleave, an assistant of Dennis Graves, were enrolled in the workshop and both had a collection of swords for show and sale. The staff and participants alike were very fortunate to see a cross representation of weapons available in the country.

By the weekend, everyone showed signs of combat fatigue and the much needed one and a half days of rest were welcomed. Some participants shared a riverboat ride down the Mississippi on Saturday afternoon while others chose to remain on campus. Despite their recreational choices for the afternoon, everyone seemed to let down his hair and boogie on down to the clubs in Blues Alley, home of the blues.

The grand finale of the first week occurred on Sunday when the workshop participants took their annual pilgrimage to Elvis' Graceland. Drew Fracher was gracious enough to organize the party and served as the SAFD tour guide on the trip. By Sunday evening everyone had mellowed out and all had settled in early in anticipation of the second week.

The arrival of two new staff members brought about changes in the daily schedule. David Leong (unarmed) assisted by Payson Burt and Dale Kirby (Katana) assisted by Richard Raether were added to the schedule. The day now consisted of two classes per morning, afternoon and evening. The morning commenced at 8:45 a.m. with warm-ups and ended at 10:15 p.m. Sensei Dale Kirby, a true master and well respected man of the martial arts proved to be an outstanding addition to the 1987 workshop staff. His teaching of the "Samurai Way" as well as the traditional techniques of katana touched each and every one of the participants and staff physically, emotionally, and spiritually. No one left his class without feeling some kind of fulfillment.

On Saturday, Mr. Kirby and his son put on a demonstration of phenomenal grace and agility with a tremendous diversity of style. All types

of martial arts including Bo and Jo Staff, Katana (long sword), Wakasashi (short sword), Nunchaku, and several forms of karate were expertly performed by this gentleman. Though they hadn't worked together in months, their timing and sense of spatial awareness was of the utmost clarity and definition. The exactness of every move showed evidence of years of training.

The end of the second week brought a close to a lengthy set of nightly meetings conducted by the officers of the SAFD along with the Fight Masters who were present at the workshop. The annual meeting brought the officers together to discuss many crucial issues that had emerged during the past year as well as new topics of future concern. James Finney was welcomed as the new treasurer as David Boushey stepped aside from the position he had held for ten years. The Society will miss this man's limitless contributions.

Farewells were said to David Boushey and Drew Fracher after another night at "Blues Alley" and by Sunday preparations were made for the final week. Patrick Crean arrived after two frustrating days of conflicts with U.S. Immigration officers and a new week had begun.

Finishing touches were added to all the fights and the final stages of scene preparation were being rehearsed in every imaginable space: laundry rooms, lounges, hallways, and classrooms. Patrick Crean's sabre classes along with his question and answer sessions proved to be a nice break from the intensity of test preparations. The last week was incredibly hectic with several things going on at all times. Advanced students worked on their choreographic and teaching assignments. Fight Masters taught classes and the teaching assistants busied themselves after classes coaching the certification test fights.

Friday July 31st had arrived and so had the Certification Test Fights. A total of thirty nine people took the test. The unusually large number of people failing to pass the test was due to the fact that many people neglected to act the fight. The actors needed to show more evidence of immediacy, sense of danger, sense of reckless abandonment while displaying a solid understanding of basic technique. Everyone must remember that the certificate clearly states that the award is presented to an Actor/Combatant. In addition, a number of people chose to fight with more weapons than they were presently able to handle. The new option of being certified in five weapons proved too big a challenge to resist for many. A few people who barely passed in five weapons might have received recommendations had they chosen to fight in three.

Armand Schultz and Joe Dempsey received SAFD patches for the best scene. Playing the characters of Siskel and Ebert these two fought their way through many of the cinema's greatest confrontations. Armand also received the Patrick Crean award for overall contribution to the workshop as a student and fighter and Joe Dempsey received an SAFD pin for "best fighter." The Patrick Crean award consisting of an engraved sword with the "Dean's" name on it was generously donated by Rod Casteel.

A Knight At the Fights, the final showcase of fight scenes randomly selected from the Teacher Certification Program and the Certification Test, was very successful. The entire evening put together admirably by the teaching assistants went smoothly. Siskel and Ebert served as narrators through the evening and Paddy opened and closed the show in grand style.

After the showcase the entire workshop retired to Wicked Wanda's P+J Cafe for beer and burgers, eight ball and music--a delightful end to an intense schedule of classes, meetings, rehearsals and performances. Many thanks to Jose Helming and Memphis State University for their contribution and support.

The following passed the certification test at the National Workshop in Memphis.

826	Joe Bostick	Recommended: Passed:	Unarmed Quarterstaff Courtsword Rapier/Dagger Broadsword
827	Gordon Carpenter	Recommended: Passed:	Unarmed Quarterstaff Courtsword Rapier/Dagger Broadsword
828	Brian Begley	Passed:	Unarmed Quarterstaff Rapier/Dagger Broadsword Courtsword
829	Matt Rau	Passed:	Unarmed Quarterstaff Rapier/Dagger Broadsword Courtsword
830	Jamie Mann	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword
831	Bill Forchion	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword
832	Joe Dempsey	Recommended  Passed:	Broadsword Courtsword Unarmed Quarterstaff Rapier/Dagger
833	Armand Schultz	Recommended  Passed:	Broadsword Courtsword Unarmed Quarterstaff Rapier/Dagger
834	Randi MacKensie	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Courtsword Unarmed
835	John Kooi	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Courtsword Unarmed
836	Ivan Pelley	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
837	Chris Davenport	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
838	Lloyd Caldwell	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Courtsword Unarmed
839	Duane Orlemann	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Courtsword Unarmed
840	Randy Bailey	Passed:	Unarmed Rapier/Dagger

841	Lonny MacDougall	Passed:	Courtsword Unarmed Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword Quarterstaff
842	Jim Wren	Passed:	Unarmed Rapier/Dagger Broadsword Courtsword
843	Chris Darland	Passed:	Unarmed Rapier/Dagger Broadsword Courtsword
844	Pat Anderson Flowers	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword
845	Sam Weakly	Passed:	Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword

# TEACHER CERTIFICATION WORKSHOP

## MEMPHIS TENNESSEE 1987

by J. D. Martinez,  
*Master Teacher and Coordinator*

The standards established and maintained by the Fight Masters of the Society of American Fight Directors for the National Stage Combat Workshop were increased in difficulty and magnitude for the Teacher Certification Workshop. Long, arduous days and nights practicing with all of the certifiable weapons, coupled with an enormous amount of factual information, marked this first annual workshop. Approximately one hundred and sixty-eight hours of instruction were offered during the three week workshop. In addition to the contact hours with the Fight Masters, the students were presented with challenging assignments to be completed on their own time. Nowhere else in the Western world may a student find training of such depth and scope in the stage combat arts.

The entire first week was devoted to recreating, rehearsing, and performing for the camera the past Certification Test Fights in rapier and dagger, courtsword, broadsword, quarterstaff and unarmed combat. The certification test fights were taught to the student teachers by the Fight Masters who had originally choreographed the fight tests. An average of four choreographed fight tests were learned by the students each day! Certainly an exhilarating pace of study! Bodies quickly adjusted to the strenuous demands of kinesthetic training. Minds unaccustomed to absorbing such volumes of intricate choreography began to stretch and appreciate the logic inherent in well-conceived stage fights.

The second week the demands escalated to include historic material and choreographic theory. Classes such as Choreographing Contemporary Violence, Professional Choreography, Teaching Techniques, and Choreographing Mass Battles were given. Each class contained within it a choreographic assignment for each student. Not only were the students asked to choreograph stage fights, they also performed in each other's choreography as combatants. In addition, classes in Rapier and Cloak and Sword and Buckler were presented. It seemed that from the obligatory warm-up at 8:45 a.m., often until 11:00 p.m. each night (when the practice studios were closed by the teaching assistants), one could find students of the Teacher Certification Workshop working on choreographic assignments--weapons in hand--as they practiced their craft.

Also during the second week, the first portion of the extensive testing for Teacher Certification was conducted. Each student teacher was presented with a particular weapon and series of techniques to be taught to a group of volunteers from the National Stage Combat Workshop. The student teachers were presented with their teaching assignment only one hour before their scheduled twenty minutes of teaching time. The student teachers then taught the techniques to the volunteers, while the Fight Masters observed their ability to structure limited class time and to teach the assigned techniques safely and effectively.

The third week was devoted to preparing for the Teacher Certification Test. There was historic material to absorb, information on terminology to memorize, and SAFD certification procedures and standards to grasp. In addition each student was required to choreograph certification Test Fights in unarmed, rapier and dagger and a third weapon. The prospective teacher was then to teach those fights to his/her fellow students and prepare them for a performance of a complete Certification Test Fight for the cameras, utilizing all of the compulsory techniques for each weapon, as required by the SAFD. This

was a very demanding exercise, as each student was required to not only choreograph and teach his/her own certification test in three weapons, but also was required to perform in two other tests choreographed by his/her colleagues! That is nine separate fights to create, mentally and physically, in four days.

On Thursday of the last week, the students were given a written exam beginning at 8:00 a.m. By 9:15 a.m. they began the final rehearsals for video-taping their test fights. They were required to begin taping by 7:30 p.m. that evening, so that the Fight Masters could view the test fights and conduct additional oral exams if they wished.

I am extremely proud of all of the students who attended this first annual Teacher Certification Workshop. They worked very very hard from the first day to the last. Their dedication to their craft and willingness to constructively interact with each other and the Fight Masters was exemplary. They contributed tremendously to the professional ambiance of both workshops and were wonderful examples for the students of the National Stage Combat Workshop of the kind of professionalism and dedication required to excel in the Stage Combat Arts. A positive and warmly-felt camaraderie developed among those dedicated individuals. The success of the Teacher Certification Workshop was largely theirs, and we as instructors learned a great deal from them. Next year's TCW will be better for the untiring commitment and constructive perspective of these first student teachers.

The following students passed the Teacher Certification Tests and were officially recognized as Certified Teachers by the Society of American Fight Directors:

Geoffrey Alm  
Ralph H. Anderson  
Dan Carter  
James Finney  
Mark Olsen  
Richard Raether  
Susan Vegedes  
David Woolley

The Fight Masters of the first annual TCW were: David Boushey, J. R. Beardsley, Patrick Crean, Drew Fracher, David Leong, J. D. Martinez, J. Allen Suddeth and special guest instructor, Dale Kirby.

Any person interested in being included in next years Teacher Certification Workshop must send a letter of intent to the President, J. D. Martinez. In addition, prospective students must include a non-refundable deposit of two hundred dollars, a video-tape of themselves performing a fight with a minimum of rapier and dagger, unarmed and a third weapon of their choice. A resume must be included with any application for admission into the TCW. In lieu of a video-tape, a prospective student may present a letter of recommendation by a Fight Master. It is helpful if a prospective student has previously been certified as an Actor Combatant at a National Stage Combat Workshop. The deadline for this material will be May 1, 1988. The entire tuition for the TCW in 1988 will be eight hundred fifty dollars. A maximum of fourteen students will be accepted.

## LES LIASONS DANGEREUSES

This Christopher Hampton adaptation of the celebrated de Laclos novel climaxed with a transition-rapier duel choreographed by Malcolm Ransom and containing some interesting "non-realistic" effects. I have seen Ransom's work at the National (**The Critic, The Mayor of Alamea**), the West End (**Scarlet Pimpernel**) and at the Royal Shakespeare Company (**Les Miserables, Les Liasons Dangereuses**). This is some of his most pleasing and successful work. He is able to concentrate on just two combatants and is freed (or freed himself) from naturalistic conventions. The fight contains some fascinating effects and was the most successful I've yet seen at extending and developing the themes and characterizations of the play.

The setting is France in the 1780's, and the weapons are fairly accurate replicas of transition-rapiers. Both combatants wore leather gauntlets and fought in shirtsleeves and breeches.

The opening scene introduces Le Marquise de Merteuil, a consummate gamester. She sums up her view of life and love in a key scene with le Vicomte de Valmont as "single combat." "Win or die" is her philosophy, and we understand Valmont's destiny clearly. After the final duel Valmont's body remains onstage during the final scene as Merteuil and the surviving women tie up the plot's loose ends. Her conclusion, standing just upstage of Valmont's body, is that she must "continue the game..."

The bladework consisted primarily of thrusts and doubles, exhibiting good point control and many deceptions of parry. Cuts were few, never parried but avoided, and used to good rhythmic effect. Attacks were executed "on the pass" with no fencing-style footwork and few exchanges in a straight-line. There were no discernible lunges of the modern style, even in the kill. There were no left-hand parries per se, but the left hand was used for seizures of the blade. All in all this was a fairly "historically accurate"

representation of the fencing of the time, though perhaps the transition rapier is most commonly associated with an earlier period.

The duel brings into conflict Valmont (TONY nominee Alan Rickman) and the Chevalier Dancenny (Hilton McRae). Both have been lovers of Merteuil, and she has used both against the other as her "creatures" in her plotting. In addition Dancenny has been used as a pawn by both Valmont and Merteuil against the other. The scene opens with thundering sound effects of a style not heard before, though the production used music throughout. The effect was reminiscent of the "Suicide Scherzo" from the soundtrack of **A Clockwork Orange**. The stage furniture is cleared and both combatants are stripped to their shirts and don gloves, all by candlelight. After the desultory preparatory dialogue they come en garde, Valmont using Danet's Italian-garde, though particularly upright (knees only slightly bent). A long moment of building suspense is heightened by the use of Henry Marshall's "twiddle:"

The initial sequence is purely a 'feeling out' procedure,...can he fence or not? The pause that precedes the fight is vital. No one in the audience will race for the lavatory once the blades are out...The moves to start are miniscule, but very effective if properly acted. The twiddle is simply taking your point round to the other side of your opponent's point, using the fingers only and keeping contact with the blade so the sound is a slight 'ting.' Both duelists stay in the tierce position.

expressing sentiment du fer, or the attempt to feel the other's blade. A textbook example of this moment is found in **The Duelists**, the third duel of the movie ( the second between Ferrault and D'Hubert).

It is apparent in the opening phrases that Valmont is the more experienced fighter, but that Dancenny's reflexes are faster. The second beat or exchange was marred by an obvious missed parry by

Rickman, resulting in a resounding smack on the right (upstage) thigh, ignored (properly?) by both actors. With the third exchange Valmont begins to tire quickly and closes into a lovely corps-a-corps in which both try to pull away from the other rather than push as in the cliché.

Valmont's building exhaustion (boredom? disgust?) is highlighted at each point with the reintroduction of the strange music. He stops, we hear the music, the fight resumes. He stops again, closes his eyes and stands arms out and relaxed, defenceless as we hear the music again. Finally he walks towards Dancenny's point, as if to spit himself on it. The disconcerted Dancenny retreats quickly, Valmont pursues him, building speed twice around the stage until finally Dancenny runs him through. Though this move drew audible gasps from the audience, it was marred by the obvious "slapping" movement (the blade clearly came in an upward motion rather than forward) and by two feet of blade protruding beyond Valmont's back. However, in defence of McRae, it is a truism that "he who goeth backward commonly takes shorter steps than he who advanceth" resulting in the choking-up of the safety margin.

Particular notice should be made of the excellent use of the moment of coming en-garde for character development. Likewise Ransom is to be complimented on his fine point-work, phrasing, and the fine rhythmic variations in the sounds of blade contact. Though the pauses between phrases were longer than I thought effective, it is refreshing to see a choreographer letting his bladework take a second priority to character. One could always tell who was winning and who losing, though this was not true of each individual exchange. A distinguishing and praiseworthy characteristic of all Ransom's work I have seen is a more developed sense of musicality and more refined orchestration than is typical of most American choreographers. In my view his

approach comes closest to embracing and embodying the dichotomy of "beautiful violence."

Tony Soper

## TWO NIGHTS AT TWO FIGHTS

This summer I had the opportunity to see **Les Liaisons Dangereuses** at the Music Box on Broadway, followed a week later by **Rosencranz and Guildenstern are Dead** at the Roundabout Theatre off Union Square.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's production of **Liaisons** features an oleaginous Alan Rickman as the Vicomte de Valmont in a drama of social and psychological manipulation which can only be described as sadistic. Suffice it to say that the tension which characterizes the play builds inexorably, circling the stage in scene after scene, seeking an outlet. Unfortunately, the climactic duel is bungled, a favorable chance lost.

The duel between Alan Rickman and Hilton McRae (as the Chevalier Danceny) is fought with "court swords" in a time period immediately prior to the French Revolution. A rapid scene change, with billows of stage vapors, and a loud and unsettling oscillatory noise shocks the audience. Swords come out, the duelists pose, and then not much happens. There is no sense that this is a dangerous activity. Weapons which are designed solely for thrusting are wafted about. The possibilities of the court sword repertoire; one-two's, doubles, double disengages, are completely neglected. Instead we are treated to repeated wide envelopements done strolling about the stage, with improbably slashing thrown in seemingly at random. One wonders; is this perhaps intended to be surreal? No, it's just pretentiousness. Alan Rickman, who was impressive in his stage movement and presence, seems suddenly transformed into a careless bravo, finally trotting into Hilton McRae's extended point. Fight Director Malcolm Ransom (who has

extensive and impressive credits) could have done better.

In refreshing contrast, the massed fights staged by SAFD members Tim Carryer and Babs Bailey for **Rosencranz and Guildenstern** are a perfect example of stage technique applied appropriately. No less "surreal" than the **Liaisons** duel, the rollicking piratical encounter has everything one could want; swordsmen swinging in on ropes, one pirate fighting off several sailors, flashing blades up and down the staircase, all in a spirit of good, clean mayhem. The pace and action are dazzling. No one takes it seriously. The audience laps it up.

It is evident that the actor-combatants in this production are really well schooled in their craft. Their fencing, intricate and precise, rivets our attention. Even the naive in the audience can tell that these are pros who are not "faking it." A job well done!

**Richard J. Gradkowski**

### THE THREE MUSKETEERS

This new adaptation by Bruce Hurlbert of Dumas' classic at Seattle Children's Theatre eliminates the romance between D'Artagnan and Milady, and reduces Constance's feelings for D'Artagnan to those for "a brother." It also makes some dubious changes in the politics of the play. Buckingham isn't so much interested in aiding the rebels at La Rochelle because they are Protestants, or out of frustrated love for the Queen (in this production she is never remotely interested in him romantically), but because he is English, and presumably therefore wicked (or at least misguided). The one hour forty five minute adaptation does retain most of the major fights however, and throws in a couple of dream-ballet numbers for good measure.

David Boushey, who also did the choreography for Seattle Children's Theatre's **Robin Hood** (reviewed in the May issue of **The Fight Master**) was allowed to use kill moves in this production. The

children were not visibly damaged by exposure to this particular "violence," so hopefully in the next production the children might be able to handle a little romance on stage as well. As in **Robin Hood**, the theatre management made a very welcome announcement before the curtain, explaining that the children must keep their hands and feet and especially papers, gum wrappers off the stage for the safety of themselves and the actors.

All combatants used cup-hilted epee-blade stage rapiers, save Athos, who sported a swept-hilt. The dominant style throughout is usually called "single rapier," meaning that the body is borne rather as in court-sword or modern fencing, side-on and left hand aloft, but cuts are heavily used. "Single Rapier" has no historically accurate correspondence, but is readily recognizable by any fan of the movie swashbucklers of the 30's and 40's (Flynn and Rathbone for example). The heavy reliance on cuts was an unfortunate choice here because of the extremely small playing area and large number of fighters in the famous set pieces (Duel behind the Lux, at the Dovecote, Battle of La Rochelle). Consequently the choreography was cramped, bladework was heavy, and too many fighters were too close to each other. At one point in the climactic Rochefort/D'Artagnan fight, D'Artagnan parried a vertical head cut with his sword (a parry sometimes called *quinte*) and banged bells with his opponent in an unintentional *corps-a-corps*! The attacker met the defender's forte with his own! This is fighting too close for safety.

The set, as mentioned above, was much too small to fit all four musketeers and their opponents safely. There were several levels that might have been used to more effect, though this might have been a decision based on actor awkwardness and inexperience. But most found it impossible to negotiate the stairs and upper levels without banging their baldrics and blades into the railings.

An odd costume note: some wore baldrics and others hip-type holsters; none used scabbards. This mismatch was all the more noticeable because the rest of the costuming was quite rich and historically detailed. Perhaps it was an all-too common instance of lack of communication between the costumer and the fight director.

It's common for the first fight to be a fencing lesson between D'Artagnan and his father. Here it is cut and a "dream-ballet" substituted, showing D'Artagnan downstage center, facing the audience, recounting his dreams of being a musketeer while slowly "shadow-boxing" his parries and attacks. Simultaneously, we see a single figure (D'Artagnan's future self?) in a strange light directly upstage of D'Artagnan fending off three attackers with the same movements, in the same tempo as our hero. The shadow fighters upstage were obviously intended to be silent, so the sequence was marred when we heard two mistaken blade contacts.

The second fight brings us into the training hall of the Musketeers, where we see four pairs of partners running through their exercises to the called commands of Captain Treville. This is our first introduction to the intrepid trio Athos, Porthos and Aramis and offers excellent opportunity for highlighting the differences in their characters as manifested in their swordplay. Since all perform the same command by Treville, we can see the subtle ways they each "personalize" the move. Unfortunately, the junior partners were all in a line directly downstage of the principals facing up, blocking our view. Using an oblique angle for the line and staggering the timing would have solved this problem.

The third scene takes place behind the Luxembourg. The four versus Jussac and the Cardinal's Guard. This is possibly the most famous scene of the book and subsequent adaptations to stage and screen. Here, the laundry line used so cleverly by Hobbs in the Leister film is

strung upstage, but no significant use is made of it in the choreography--a red-herring. Character is developed very cleverly in this scene. Aramis, because of a previous wound, fights left handed, and Athos with rapier-dagger. This was apparently the most rehearsed fight, as the four fighting couples adjusted very well to the constricted space. However, there were several horizontal head-cuts conspicuous by their sloppy execution, but perhaps the actors were feeling overly cautious about a full follow through on so crowded a stage. The fight climaxed with a brilliantly executed piece of comic business. Jussac's braces or belt was sliced off him, causing his pants to fall down around his ankles, much to the delight of the children. Judicious note should be taken that Jussac was facing upstage and had only two steps or so to take in order to hobble offstage.

The next major encounter involves the same pairs as the Lux, but they now meet at the infamous Dovecote Inn. Because of some furniture introduced in order to show an interior, this fight was even more cramped than the last. The Cardinal's guards also had to contend with heavy full cloaks (disguises) and all had to contend with a perversely dark lighting plot. This fight, like all fights in this production, suffered from a sense of "coming out of nowhere." There was no development of the action from the preceding moments. The fight begins in a rush, plays itself out all at one tempo, and just as abruptly, ends. This "all-climax" tempo, like a toggle switch being thrown, coupled with pairs of fighters who are not allowed to move their feet or about the stage, makes focus extremely diffuse. One never knows where to look. Consequently there's no sense of who's winning or losing at any given moment. There are many techniques for guiding audience focus, so that they might not miss important moments, but they were woefully lacking.

The fifth scene, D'Artagnan to London, features Athos fighting three of the Cardinal's henchmen. Perhaps because it was less crowded, this fight was the most successful. It was a bit rushed, but the actor (Geoffery Alm), who lists certification by both the British and American Societies in his bio and had obviously had some stage combat experience, was allowed some nice choreographic combinations (you've got to come up with something to keep three opponents at bay) and much fuller, more interesting use was made of the stage. There were two conspicuous missed parries, but there was no real danger, as the actor was able to control his blade and still carry off the phrase with panache.

Next came the first rescue of Constance, the sixth major fight in ninety minutes! Both choreographic invention and actor endurance had begun to visibly flag at this point. But the otherwise uninspired scene was redeemed by the show-stopping moment of character development. Near the end, Aramis (Kerry Skalsky, dual certified and a student of Boushey's) disarms his opponent and gallantly returns his weapon. This was a running gag with Aramis. This time, however, his opponent then disarms him, and his flying sword is caught by Constance! She gamely (if somewhat clumsily) holds forth, much to the amused astonishment of the three musketeers and the enthusiastic applause from the audience.

The seventh scene is Milady versus D'Artagnan. It was oddly one of the few fights that had accompanying music. Milady attacks several times with a dagger and is disarmed. Unfortunately, the dagger was either wood or plastic, as it hit the floor in silence, its incongruous sound drew sniggers from the audience. It would have been a simple thing to cover the disarms with an actor's vocalization.

The Battle of La Rochelle is the eighth major fight and second Dream Ballet. Conducted all in slow-motion with special lighting effects like the prologue fight, this fight was also

marred by several incorrect contacts on the blade, necessarily making inappropriate noise. However, perhaps because of the reduction in speed, better use was made of all levels of the set. It should be noted that the slow-motion effect at this point was confusing to the audience. A father sitting next to me explained to his puzzled child "They're practicing again I guess.." Since this convention had been established earlier in this context, his confusion is understandable.

The second rescue of Constance in the Convent is the ninth scene. It begins with Athos fighting off four and quickly escalates into an all-out-brawl. There is nice choreographic invention here with Athos barely managing to fend off four simultaneous attacks, and then introducing each of the rest of the Musketeers, one at a time, to even odds. It is a difficult choreographic problem keeping five separated fights on stage, all in synch and in their separate areas. If one pair shifts stage position, then of course so must all pairs. This was the only fight in which David tackled this problem, and the difficulty became apparent when three of the five pairs had to pause in their fights at the same time, in order for the other two to catch up.

The final confrontation between D'Artagnan and his nemesis, the one-eyed Rochefort ("He is the Cardinal's living blade...") was disappointing. Here again the actors were so close that they occasionally clashed bells. The ad-libbing here by the other Musketeers would have been welcome, except that the language used was glaringly contemporary and out of character ("Come on, D'Artagnan..." "You can do it...") and had been used nowhere else in the show. D'Artagnan's (first) kill move was diminished by his running Rochefort through literally "to the hilt"--a difficult stage illusion to pull off plausibly.

A nice twist was added when Rochefort, presumed dead, raises up behind an unsuspecting D'Artagnan to strike him. However, D'Artagnan

switches his blade to his left hand, reverses it, and runs Rochefort through again, under his left arm, without turning around! This is a spectacular move (stolen from the movie **Conan**, who lifted it from a Mifune chambarra) which didn't quite work because a) we didn't see it coming and b) it was on the upstage side of both actors, who were necessarily close together, and so blocked from most of the house.

The Seattle Children's Theatre is to be praised for tackling ever more ambitious projects, with the help of a professional Fight Director. Here's hoping they: continue casting certified Actor/Combatants; give Fight Directors more stage space, rehearsal time and input into set and costume design; move into other children's favorite swashbucklers --- Scaramouche, Ivanhoe, Scarlet Pimpernel, and Zorro.

**Tony Soper**

#### **PUSS IN "COMBAT" BOOTS**

The Rainbow Company in Las Vegas, Nevada ended their 1987 season with the children's classic fairy tale **Puss in Boots** adapted by Max Bush. The show was delightful and performed by a very talented troupe of young actors. The highlight of the show was the combat scenes choreographed by the show's director, Joseph Kucan. The production was performed on a thrust stage with actors in very close proximity to the audience. Because of this closeness the combat moves had to be performed with great accuracy and required full concentration and blade awareness from the actors.

The show begins, as per the familiar story line, with an aging miller giving his children their inheritance. The youngest, Claude, is forced out on his own with just his father's cat and the clothes on his back. As Claude, our young hero, is facing the dismal prospect of starving to death, he decides to dine, at least for today, on "Quiche of Cat." Claude attacks Puss with his dagger and is fought off rather easily. When Claude does not cease

his attack after being thwarted on every turn, Puss picks up the old miller's cane and goes on the offensive. Puss has Claude diving and leaping all over the stage in an effort to avoid the thrusts and swipes of his cane. Claude retrieves his dagger and the fencing duel is on. Puss turns aside Claude's attack, disarms him again and tells him that if he does not apologize for the "Quiche of Cat" he will run him through. Claude does not feel threatened by a cat with a cane but when, with a twist of the handle, the cane is revealed to have a hidden sword, Claude apologizes and the story moves on.

The next big "combat" scene involves our hero, Claude, and the Ogre's servant, Alphonse. Claude has been starving since scene one and is still famished when a partridge drops from the heavens and Claude is saved...maybe. The partridge was shot by the Ogre and Alphonse has come to retrieve it for his master. In the ensuing scene the partridge changes hands innumerable times as Claude and Alphonse use guile as well as physical strength to wrest the prize from each other. This matter is decided only by the arrival of the Ogre.

The fierce Ogre puts Claude at a great disadvantage, (he scares him silly), and proceeds to give Claude a lecture on how to properly acquit one's self on or about his property. This speech is delivered with the Ogre having a death grip on Claude's nose. The scene is so well performed that by the end of the discourse you can almost feel Claude's pain.

The final combat scene is the climax of the story when Puss, using the Ogre's vanity against him, talks the Ogre, a shape-shifter, into changing to the shapes of various animals. When the Ogre becomes a lion and attacks Puss, Puss fights him off with at first his own agility and then his cane/sword. When you realize that this scene was performed on a darkened stage with one of the combatants wearing a mask it becomes even more impressive. The safety of the actors was never in

doubt while the fight itself remained believable. This scene ended with the Ogre turning himself into a mouse. A chocolate mouse was substituted at this point but I'm afraid he does not survive the scene as Puss bites off his head and devours the poor creature.

If you like Children's stories, fairy tales, or **Puss in Boots** in particular, this production was fun. If you enjoy watching stage combat performed well, this was a showcase of how it should be done. Claude, played by Daniel Kucan, and Puss, played by Kirk Stowers, have been students of the art of combat for some time. Their training by Joseph Kucan is marvelously displayed in this

production. Michael Sokey, as the Ogre, and Matt Richards, as Alphonse, performed at the high level of expertise that is becoming the expected norm of Joe's students.

Stage Combat is alive and well in Las Vegas where it is not only being taught, but being performed at the Rainbow Company.

**Michael Connolly**

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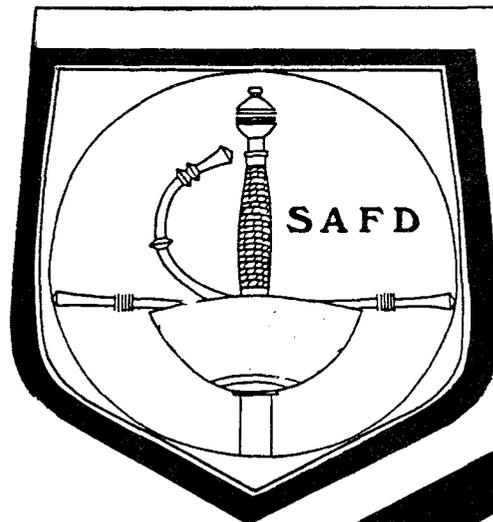
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I read with delight Mr. Charles Conwell's letter about the advantages of studying modern competition fencing to enhance fight choreography. I could not agree with him more, but it seems almost absurd that he should even have to say something that was once so obvious to those concerned with stage combat. Fencing was once the very basis of what passes for swordplay on stage now.

So often I've heard actors and directors assert that "real" swordplay just isn't dramatically effective. This is partly true; in a street fight or duel with smallswords ("courtswords") one would not even want the opponent to follow the development of an attack, much less an "audience." However, this assertion of unreality is usually made by someone so untrained that he might not even recognize most of the movements of serious skilled swordplay.

Anyone who competes in modern fencing, especially sabre, soon learns that he has to make about five touches for every two that are scored. due to equipment failure or the attack simply not being seen by the judges. One learns to display the hit to be credited with it.

The foil is, of course, based on the smallsword, which represents the zenith development of the European sword and of swordplay. I have had the good fortune to be instructed in smallsword by a most patient and indulgent instructor, himself a student of Ralph Faulkner, and know first hand how difficult real mastery of the smallsword would be to achieve. But certainly anyone accomplished in the use of the foil or smallsword could do with that skill whatever was needed, whether it be actually killing an opponent, turning on a scoring light in competition, or appearing to kill an opponent on stage.

**Dennis Graves**

I was surprised that Ms McCollum was unaware of his date of death and the

city of origin of Rocco Bonetti in the May 1986 issue of **The Fight Master**. A. D. Aylward in **The English Master of Arms**, documents from the parish registers that Rocco Bonetti died in a "thospital" in 1587, had previously been master of ordinance for the Duke of Savoy and was a citizen of Bergamo, the traditional home of harlequin, the fool, which may have been Shakespeare's **real point**.

**R. York**

### **Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts**

On May 1st I adjudicated a fight test at the Philadelphia College for the Performing Arts in Philadelphia. Testing were the students of Mr. Charles Conwell. This is the second year in a row that there has been a test at this college and I can say that the quality is improving. All the students displayed good understanding of the various skills and there were several standouts. Amy-Jane FitzPatrick and Ken Davidson did a very fine cavalry sabre fight and Joshua Batt and Patrick Kittredge performed one of the best quarterstaff fights I've seen in a while. These I single out, but all the students displayed good skills, and especially a very well acted and fought version of "Who's Afraid of Virginia Wolf." Congratulations again to Mr. Conwell and the faculty at P.C.P.A. who sponsor the test and keep Stage Combat a requirement in the curriculum.

#### **Recommended**

- 774 Cammy Sanes
- 779 Ken Davidson

#### **Passed**

- 775 Janice Mautner
- 776 Eric Smith
- 777 Rodney White
- 778 Amy-Jane FitzPatrick
- 780 Reginald Flowers
- 781 Rebecca Meister
- 782 Joshua Batt
- 783 Patrick Kittredge

Instructor: Charles Conwell  
Adjudicator: Allen Suddeth

### **The Theatre School**

(formerly The Goodman School of Drama)

On Thursday, April 16, 1987, I had the privilege of adjudicating a Certification Test Fight at The Theatre School on the DePaul University Campus in the Lincoln Park Theatre District of Chicago. The newly acquired building which houses this professional theatre school (one of the oldest theatre training institutions in the country) is well endowed with

classroom and rehearsal spaces. However, the largest space in the building has concrete floors and the students were forced to perform their test fights on the worst of all possible surfaces. Nevertheless, I was delightfully surprised at the degree of control exhibited by the students in their rolls and break falls.

Eight students took the test in single rapier, rapier and dagger, quarterstaff and hand-to-hand. All eight students passed the test and two students were recommended. The fights were choreographed by Mr. Michael Sokoloff, who teaches Movement in the Professional Actor Training Program. The fights were consistently safe and clever. The Hand to Hand skills exhibited were especially fine, however I felt that the Quarterstaff work was somewhat weak and wasn't up to the quality presented in Single Rapier and Rapier and Dagger.

The following list of students passed the certification test in all weapons presented:

#### **Recommended:**

- 764 Scott Trost
- 765 Jeff Satterfield

#### **Passed:**

- 766 Moon Hi Hanson
- 767 James Recora
- 768 Chris Holloway
- 769 Dan Tieri
- 770 John N. Ryan
- 771 Steven Abrahamson

Instructor: Michael Sokoloff  
Adjudicator: J. D. Martinez

### **Ken-Zen Institute in New York**

On Saturday, May 16th, 1987, I had the pleasure of adjudicating a Society combat Test at the Ken-Zen Institute in New York. Sixteen students took part, six being students of Fight Master J. Allen Suddeth and ten being students of T. J. Glenn. On the whole the standard attained was pretty high, a lot of skill being displayed in combat, as well as ingenuity in dramatic presentation. There were four failures and four

recommendations. A special word of congratulations must go to Mr. Rick Sordelet for his joyous and most effective appearance as a Quiz Master in one of the sketches, and I should like to thank everyone concerned for a splendid time and much hospitality. A beautifully printed program complimented the proceedings. I urged the students who did not succeed not to lose heart but to try again. Their work had merit and will obviously improve.

**Recommended:**

784 Kelly Dempsey  
785 Ken Smith  
786 Ricki G. Ravitts  
787 Brian Byrnes

**Passed:**

794 Therese McLaughlin  
795 Michael John McGuinniss

Instructor: J. Allen Suddeth  
Adjudicator: Patrick Crean

788 Ruta Kidolis  
789 Madeleine Robins  
790 Mari Briggs  
791 Vic DiMonda  
792 Thom Rice  
793 Tony Rust

Instructor: T.J. Glenn  
Adjudicator: Patrick Crean

**Webster University**

On April 28th I adjudicated the students at Webster University. Of the six students that opted for certification, four passed the necessary requirements for the Society. It appeared to me once again that those students who worked at their fights excelled and those who tried to skate by didn't. I am getting to the point now in my adjudications that I am less sympathetic with students and their insistence that this was just a bad day. I am not just referring to Webster students but by and large all students. The tears of disappointment are having less effect on me as I continue to adjudicate various schools. It is in the vast majority of the cases that students simply don't work

hard enough and assume that they can talk their way through a test situation. It is not enough for a set of students to say they were going half speed to assure safety. The fights must be safe, that is a given. But they have to be convincing and believable. I have to believe that something is at stake here: that these two people don't like one another and they are going to resolve their conflict the hard way. I personally feel that the Society must get much tougher in their adjudication demands. The certificate cannot be a worthless piece of paper given to students because they tried hard or they had a pleasing personality. They have to fulfill certain requirements and these requirements must be adhered to by the various full members who adjudicate around the country. I am making a statement about adjudications in general and not about Webster. I am simply using this adjudication to emphasize the importance of the certification process overall.

By and large the Webster students who passed deserved to do so but they could have been stronger and could have worked even harder. Bob Goodwin is doing a good job preparing his students. I see him growing as a combat instructor. The fights were well choreographed and the students well trained. It is up to them to put that knowledge to use in a safe and effective way.

The following people passed the certification:

796 Mary Beth Dolan  
797 Randy Donaldson  
798 Lisa Schnoring  
799 Frank Van Bree

Instructor: Robert Goodwin  
Adjudicator: David Boushey

**Cornish Institute**

On May 1st I adjudicated the students at Cornish Institute in Seattle. The students were well prepared and Bob Macdougall had done a fine job training the various students which included two students for the University

included two students for the University of Washington. Bob is a fine teacher and choreographer and this was quite evident in the testing process. Of the twelve that took the test, ten passed with four getting recommendations. I am very picky about who I give recommendations to as I feel they are performances above and beyond what was expected of the participants. (This includes the acting of the fights.)

The various scenes were very clever and well acted. They added a great deal to the fights. Even the fights that didn't pass were very well acted. Overall, it was my pleasure to award two recommendations to the two women. One may assume that this is not anything extraordinary and they are right, but I judge all students by the same standards and the fact that the two individuals outshined most of their colleagues says alot about their tenacity and their skill level. Special praise goes to Bob Macdougall as this was his first batch of students to go up for certification. If this is any indication as to what is to come, I suspect that Cornish will have some strong students in the years to come.

The following students passed:

Recommended:

- 806 Jeanne Carter
- 807 Jennifer Prince
- 808 Paul Mitri
- 809 Mike Watson

Passed:

- 800 Lisa Halper
- 801 Ramon McClane
- 802 Elise Troske
- 803 Jane Leche
- 804 Sheryl Schmit
- 805 Amy Perry

Instructor: Robert Macdougall  
Adjudicator: David Boushey

## University of Illinois

On Sunday, May 3rd, I traveled to Champaign/Urbana, Illinois to adjudicate Dr. Robin McFarquhar's students. As usual, there was a high level of quality displayed throughout the fight test. Robin continues to provide his students with an excellent background in stage combat and the University's Theatre Program is fortunate to have him as one of their faculty. A total of sixteen people passed the test with four receiving recommendations.

All of the fights were marked with a good sense of "risk factor" or "sense of reckless abandon." They were very fast, precise and safe at the same time. And in most instances, the actors performed the choreography without making it look like choreography. I mention this note because I'm somewhat tired of fight sequences that look slow and choreographed.

Robin's use of the point in his choreography has grown considerably in the past year. I am sure assisting Allen Sudeth at the 1986 National Workshop has no doubt been of a contributing factor to this.

The four students receiving recommendations deserve special mention. All of them, particularly Greg Dolph and Bruce Orendorf were outstanding. Their adaptation from the movie **My Favorite Year** was a big success. Their athletic abilities coupled with a good scene and strong characters brought cheers to the audience. Ken Merckx and Shawn Belyea were equally effective in **Waiting for Godot**. I believe this play should be considered by more combatants because it allows so much freedom when making scene and character choices.

Recommended:

- 820 Greg Dolph
- 821 Bruce Orendorf
- 824 Ken Merckx
- 825 Shawn Belyea

Passed:

- 810 Jackie Mulvenna
- 811 Angela Deweese
- 812 Claire Zinnes
- 813 Sandy Kenyon
- 814 Ginny Sims
- 815 Kim Werkman
- 816 Dan Savage
- 817 Maureen Michael
- 818 Paul Pement
- 819 Mary Kay Gara
- 822 Greg Lhamon
- 823 Lisa Swanson

Instructor: Dr. Robin McFarquhar

Adjudicator: David Leong

**Western Illinois University**

On May 3rd I also adjudicated students at Western Illinois University. The six students taking the test (actually five plus the instructor) were choreographed by Dr. Robin McFarquhar of the University of Illinois and taught by Keith Grant. I am sorry to say that I was forced to fail all six people due to the fact that they were not totally prepared to take the test. The training was for the most part acceptable except for the occasional high thrust (face level) and close measure. The actors showed a lack of security with the choreography (stopping occasionally), missed parries and cuts and displayed an overall lack of a finished quality. I do believe that some of this occurred because Mr. Grant might not have been totally prepared to teach a class in stage fighting. If my memory serves me, he did not finish the National Stage Combat Workshop in 1985 when held at the Utah Shakespearean Festival. With only a few days of formal training (plus some additional work in various productions) one cannot expect to know enough to instruct at the college or university level. (All the more reason for the need for Joseph Martinez's advanced workshop and teacher certification programs). In all fairness to Mr. Grant, I

the need for Joseph Martinez's advanced workshop and teacher certification programs). In all fairness to Mr. Grant, I believe that everyone would have passed if more time had been spent rehearsing the fights. The decision was a most difficult one to make but after a long discussion, I believe the students understood where their weaknesses lay and what they needed to improve upon in order to successfully certification.

David Leong

**BACK ISSUES**

The following back issues of **The Fight Master** are available at four dollars an issue from the editor, Linda McCollum at P.O. Box 218, Blue Diamond, Nevada.89004

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May 1983	Volume VI...	number 2
September 1983	Volume VI...	number 3
May 1984	Volume VII	number 2
September 1984	Volume VII	number 3
January 1985	Volume VIII	number 1
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January 1987	Volume X	number 1
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**David Boushey** choreographed the fights in **Richard III** at the Utah Shakespearean Festival and taught at the National Workshop in Memphis. He is presently completing a feature film, **Eagle Island** where he acted as stunt coordinator. He will soon be starting two more films as stunt coordinator and intends to be working as a stuntman in another. He will be choreographing the fights in **Romeo and Juliet** for the Portland Opera and **Carmen** for the Seattle Opera. He will also be staging **Hamlet** for the Pioneer Theatre in Salt Lake City. If time allows he hopes to teach a couple of master classes at universities this fall and winter.

**Carryer and Bailey** were Movement Directors and staged the fights for the off-Broadway revival of **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead** in New York at the Roundabout Theatre which starred John Wood, John Rubinstein and Stephen Lang. Tim and Babs got good reviews! Last Spring Carryer and Bailey were guest artists at West Virginia University and their new show premiered there. Upcoming for the duo is a run at the Penguin Repertory Theatre in Rockland County, New York in September and the New Vaudeville Festival on October 3rd and 4th in Atlanta!

**Steven Edwards**, a member of Fights R Us, returned to Las Vegas in May to choreograph an outdoor western fight for yet another **Murder To Go** mystery at Old Nevada. The week before Steven was fighting in another murder mystery at the Riviera Hotel & Casino. He will be fighting across Europe in July with fellow member Steve Vaughan on The Orient Express with the finale taking place in Venice, Italy. Steven is still in the process of producing his first feature film, **The Hanging Ground**, a futuristic action-adventure. He is also reading scripts for development for The Hunnewell Group, 24 E. 23rd St., New York, New York, 10010 as both an independent producer and a producer for the Group. If you would like more

information, or would like to invest in action films, just contact Steven at 212/529-5888 or write to the above address.

**Drew Fracher** has just completed a one month stint as a Master teacher at the Physical Theatre Lab held at Ohio University during August. He taught swordplay and unarmed and collaborated on a Commedia project with teachers and directors, Ron Wilson, Denise Gabriel and Ronlin Foreman. Before that he taught for two weeks at the National Workshop and the Teacher Certification Workshop.

**Ellyn Glenn** was a member of the Highwayman's band at the King Richard's Faire in Carver, Massachusetts last fall. In May she participated in the May Day Celebration in Central Park for the Parks Department where she was one of the "maidens" (and fight captain) for the pirate raid. With Duncan Eagleson she co-directed and choreographed **Robin Hood** for the YWCA Summer Program benefit in Middlebury, Connecticut and did a longer version of the show at the Americape '87 Celebration in Cape May, New Jersey in conjunction with the Magna Carta Tour of the United States. This spring Ellyn and her partner were hired to teach and choreograph at Boy's Harbor, an afterschool program for underprivileged children in New York City. They will be putting on a production of **Peter Pan** with eight to eleven year olds. During the summer Ellyn will be doing public relations for the New York Renaissance Festival as well as performing there as a fighter and storyteller.

**T. J. Glenn** in April choreographed Samurai sword fights for the children's play **Momotaro** with the Washington Square players. He played the Irish Warrior Cuchulian in a film version of Yeates "On Baily Strand" which included sword and spear fights in the surf. He had three more appearances on **The Guiding Light**. Most importantly of all he choreographed several unusual sword fights using western and eastern

type sword work for a television pilot called **The Midnight Warriors** which he also co-wrote and produced. It is a half hour contemporary adventure which, if it goes to series, promises a lot of the kind of action Society members like to see. He also managed to play Charles while choreographing **As You Like It** for Columbia University. In May he stunt coordinated the western bar fight on **The Guiding Light**. His first class went up for certification and did well. In June he was in Boston doing a small sword fight at the historic Old South Meeting House and a benefit for Riverside Shakespeare Festival working for fellow associate **Todd Loweth** and his group Stuntworks. In August he was producing, choreographing and performing several sword fights in "Knightfighters" at the Central New York Renaissance Festival and then went to Boston as stunt coordinator and Sir Scroop in **Return of a King**, a post-holocaust feature film version of **Richard II** with machine gun mortars, a real fort to storm/fall off/ blow-up and numerous eastern martial arts battles.

**Mark Guinn** choreographed the outdoor drama **Tecumseh** and then spent a week with **Drew Fracher** in Louisville working on Shakespeare in Central Park. Mark was an assistant at the National Stage Combat workshop in Memphis this summer.

**Kristina Lankford** appeared as a guest lecturer at San Jose State giving one seminar on Stage Combat and teaching two basic Master Classes in conjunction with choreographing **Bullshot Crummond**. Kristina is currently working on a one-woman show production company that is being organized in preparation for auditions at Universal Studios for the part of Red Sonja in the Conan show.

**David Leong** recently finished choreographing six shows at the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire including a new creation "The Fools of Defense" featuring Doug Mumaw, Michael Donahue and Jamie Cheatham. He also staged fights for **Romeo and**

**Juliet** at the Champlain and Georgia Shakespeare Festivals. This summer David also taught classes in unarmed combat at the Chautanqua Institute and the National Stage Combat Workshop. His fights are currently on view in Center Stage's **Hamlet** directed by Stan Wojewodski and **The Witch of Edmonton** at The Folger directed by Barry Kyle of The Royal Shakespeare Company. The latter will move to the John Houseman Theatre after its run in Washington, D.C. David will be starting rehearsals in the near future for **Aunt Dan and Lemon** directed by Irene Worth at Center Stage and **Coriolanus** at the McCarter Theatre directed by Liviu Ciulei. David has a busy fall and spring with eight regional and New York choreographic assignments coming his way.

**Ian Rose** formed a fight company named **STEEL**. He wrote, produced and choreographed an Equity approved fight showcase, also called Steel, which was presented at New York's TOMI Theatre. The showcase featured scenes from the **Tales of Robin Hood** and **The Three Musketeers** as well as excerpts from Shakespeare's **Henry IV, Part I** and **Henry VI, Part I** and **Part 3**. He subsequently produced a video-tape of many of the fight scenes from the showcase.

**Edward Rozinsky** is publishing a newsletter, **Daily Movement**, for the Stage Movement Committee of the South East Theatre Conference. Their first issue came out in July. Edward is working on starting a new television show for a local station on stage movement for high school students.

**Robert Seale** continues to teach acting and physical stage techniques at York University in Toronto, Canada. This year's premiere of **Prime Time at the Fights** was received with great critical acclaim and appears destined to become a permanent annual showcase of combative talents. As well as completing his Ph.D. he is currently working on a comprehensive system of fight notation and welcomes

submissions/examples from members on their own thoughts, feelings and notation.

**J. Allen Suddeth** attended this years National Workshop in Memphis and taught courtsword while assisting Joe Martinez with the Teacher Certification Workshop. He has also finished filming **Soldier Boys** with James Earl Jones, a drama due out in November on CBS. Allen did the Fight Direction and played in several scenes with Mr. Jones. The Fall lineup includes teaching in the studio in New York (A.C.T.S.), and at the Lee Strasburg Institute, and a **Hamlet** at Fordham University as well as a new prodcution of **Scaramouche** at the Empty Space in Seattle.

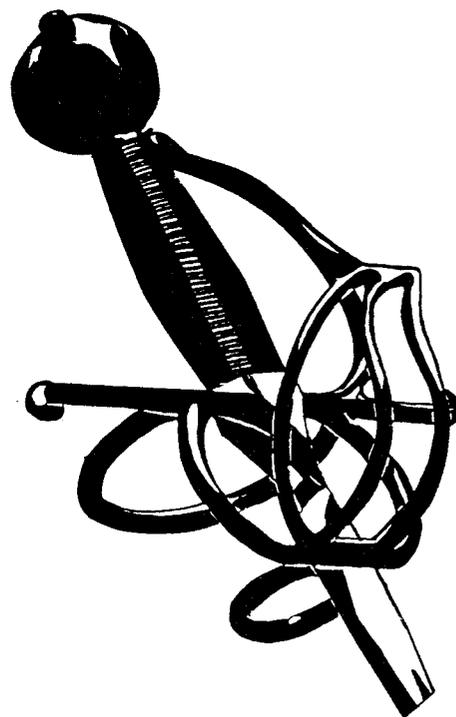
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