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The Society of American Fight Directors

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## **The Fight Master, January 1988, Vol. 11 Issue 1**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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*The* **Fight**  
**MASTER**

JANUARY 1988

JOURNAL OF THE

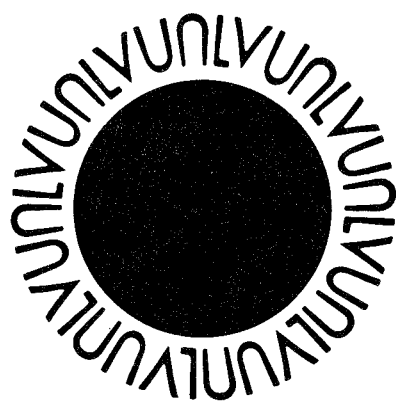
SOCIETY OF  
AMERICAN

FIGHT DIRECTORS

# de ARMOURY



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UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS

# The Fight MASTER

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

January 1988  
Volume XI number 1

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### THE FIGHT MASTER

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

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Published January, May, September  
at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.  
All inquiries concerning the Journal should  
be sent to: The Fight Master, c/o Linda McCollum, Editor,  
Department of Theatre Arts, University of Nevada,  
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### SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

President  
Vice President  
Treasurer  
Secretary

Joseph Martinez  
Drew Fracher  
James Finney  
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.*

*Application for change in status within the Society should be addressed to Joseph Martinez, P.O. Box 1053, Lexington, Virginia 24450.*

As we begin the new year, some major changes are taking place within the Society. These changes are due in part to the in-roads the Society is making in the entertainment industry. As the Society comes more and more to the forefront and has an impact on contracts, television, film, training, and rehearsal processes, it becomes necessary that those members who are representing the Society in the industry be of the finest quality.

The officers decided to establish a professional wing to the Society with the professional classifications of Certified Actor/Combatant Proficient in (specific weapons), Certified Teacher and Certified Fight Master. Those holding professional status must re-certify every three years in order to maintain their professional status in the Society. Drew Fracher carefully reviews this process and the conversion process in his report in this issue.

A similar concern with standards is to be found in the review section which I instituted upon becoming editor of the journal in the spring of 1984. I have encouraged our members, non members and readers to send in articles that specifically deal with fight choreography.

Each review is the individual's personal opinion, his response to what he saw during the theatrical experience. It is hoped that this response will be knowledgeable as well as objective. Since we humans are naturally judgemental, it is always easier to see what we don't agree with than what we do, and we tend to respond to the former. The respondent needs perceptive critical eyes and must be able to evaluate the part being examined in relationship to the total concept of the production, even if the respondent does not agree with the concept. The reviewer merely responds to what he saw/experienced regardless of what the

director, actor or fight choreographer believes he has put before the audience.

Some of the problems with stage combat that are repeatedly mentioned in reviews are technique showing, lack of focus and lack of character motivation. These are obviously areas that need to be dealt with and may be areas that the Society should address in its training programs.

The National Stage Combat Workshop and the Advanced Teacher Training Program will be at Memphis State University again this year. The workshop training is growing and the need for additional workshops may soon be needed. Touche Unlimited is sponsoring the International Academy of the Sword in Madrid Spain with Oscar Kolombatovich this June. Only twelve advanced students will be admitted to the program this year. This is a rare opportunity to study with some of the top professionals in the field in a very unusual setting.

It is my hope that the letters section will expand this year. Many of you voice concerns and ask very astute questions in your phone conversations. By sharing our individual concerns with other members we can have an open dialogue. Only by sharing of opposing view points and opinions can there be potential for growth and change within the organization.

**Linda Carlyle McCollum**

My Fellow Members and Colleagues,

With our president, Joseph Martinez, being out of the country, I find myself responsible for the President's Report in this our first issue of 1988. First of all I would like to take this opportunity to wish all of you the very best in the coming year. Secondly, I would request that each and every one of you "take the ball and run with it" and strive to make 1988 the most productive and prosperous year the Society has ever seen. A great many changes and much progress have been realized in the last year and now is the time to keep the momentum going and to continue taking the giant steps forward that 1987 brought forth. A great many members have seen terrific progress in their personal careers as actor/combatants, teachers and choreographers during the past year and this is a tremendous boon to all of us and the organization at large. The lines of communication among members are continuing to grow and the Society is fast becoming THE organization to look to for stage combat in this country. I urge all of you to keep up the great work and to keep the Society banner held high. Let us help each other in every way possible and in turn the organization will help each of us. Congratulations to all of you for a job well done in 1987; let us look to '88 as a landmark year for quality growth in the Society.

As each of you know, there have been a number of changes recently instituted in membership and status. After many hours of meetings and discussion the officers have reached a policy which becomes effective immediately. The following are the new requirements for each level of membership.

All of the levels of membership within the organization will change to Professional and Non-Professional status. Certified Actor/Combatants, Certified Teachers and Certified Fight Masters will be the only levels of membership sanctioned by the organization to work professionally and these three classifications are the only ones that may use the name of the Society of American Fight Directors in order to procure employment. In other words, these three classifications are the only levels of membership that are sanctioned by the Society in the professional arena. Our aim is to improve the quality of our membership as we offer ourselves for professional employment. Those individuals presently holding the status of Affiliate or Associate will be given ample time to complete the required conversion of status, without cost, and after that grace period the status of those that choose not to convert will remain in the non-professional status. At the end of the grace period, which is March 1990, the levels of membership status will be:

**Professional**

- Certified Fight Master
- Certified Teacher
- Certified Actor/Combatant
- Proficient in(Specific Weapons)

**Non-Professional**

- Associate
- Affiliate
- Friend

**Conversion of AFFILIATE status to the Professional Classification of CERTIFIED ACTOR/COMBATANT PROFICIENT IN(specific weapons).**

All present members of the Society of American Fight Directors in good standing holding the status of AFFILIATE prior to March 1987 may convert their status to that of CERTIFIED ACTOR COMBATANT PROFICIENT IN (specific weapons) by notifying the Secretary of the following:

What weapons they certified in  
Where they were certified  
With whom they studied  
Who adjudicated the test

There is no fee for this conversion done in the grace period before March 1990. After March 1990 all Certified Actor/Combatants will have to re-classify every three years in order to retain the professional classification. Those Certified Actor/Combatants who do not re-classify every three years will have their status changed to that of FRIEND.

To re-classify as a Certified Actor/Combatant a member will have to pay a fee of twenty five dollars and take the current certification test in his weapons of proficiency (i.e. that set at the last National Stage Combat Workshop and available in print from the Vice President) before a Certified Fight Master or send to the Vice President an unedited half inch VHS video tape shot from a stationary camera of his performing the certification test in his specific weapons. This process will begin as of March 1990.

### **Conversion of ASSOCIATE status to the professional classification of CERTIFIED TEACHER.**

All present members of the Society of American Fight Directors in good standing holding the status of Associate may convert their classification to that of Certified Teacher by completing the following:

1. Submit a letter of intent to convert classification to the Vice President
2. Send in an up-to-date resume which includes training, professional credits and teaching experience to the Vice President
3. Have his work as a teacher/choreographer observed by a Certified Fight Master or send to the Vice President an unedited half inch VHS video shot from a stationary camera of his teaching two students a piece of fight choreography from a certification test of his own not to exceed seven minutes.

4. Take a written test on history and theory which may be done through the mail.

There will be no fee for the conversion of Associate status to that of Certified Teacher if done before July 1990. After that date all Certified Teachers must renew their membership classification every three years by:

- 1) Paying a \$50.00 fee and completing the above requirements listed for conversion from Associate to Certified Teacher,

**OR**

- 2) Attending the Advanced National Stage Combat Workshop and passing the Teacher Certification Test.

A Certified Teacher who does not renew his membership classification will have his membership status converted to that of FRIEND.

Any Associate or Certified Actor/Combatant who wishes to apply for the professional status of Certified Teacher must complete the criteria listed above for conversion of status from Associate to Certified Teacher and pay the fifty dollar application fee.

Any member wishing to raise his status must complete the above listed requirements and pay the following application fees:

Certified Actor/Combatant  
\$ 25.00

Certified Teacher  
\$ 50.00

Certified Fight Master  
\$100.00

The above information may seem like hieroglyphics but I can assure you all that we worked long and hard to establish a workable policy. As Vice President I am in charge of all conversions of status with the exception of Affiliate to Certified Actor/Combatant. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at home and I will send you the information



# TREASURER'S REPORT

you need. I strongly urge any of you who are interested in obtaining the status of Certified Teacher to consider attending the Advance Workshop. The amount of technique and choreographic work taught there in three weeks is simply amazing. There is no substitution for this experience and we would like all of our Certified Teachers to be put through such paces. Upon Joseph's return, the written test will be standardized and available for taking. Until then, that portion of the test will be on hold. I feel assured that we will have all of that together by the end of February. Again, if any of you have any questions please feel free to contact me and I will try to clear things up for you.

In the mean time, allow me to wish each of you a very happy and prosperous 1988. May all of your fighting be illusionary, safe and all that you envision. Peace.

Your comrade in arms,  
**Drew Fracher**

Yes, comrades-in-arms, it's that time again. Dues are needed to keep the Society running and they are needed now. Officially, they are due by the end of January, so send them to Linda McCollum as soon as possible. Make sure you let us know what you are doing and where you are currently living so we can keep the membership roster current. I will send out a postcard in February, but to give you advance notice, here is a reminder that if you don't pay by the end of March you have to start the whole process of certification over again at the bottom, kind of like a bad game of "Chutes and Ladders."

Hope you all had a fantastic, safe holiday season and I look forward to hearing about another year of fantastic, safe stage fights around the country.

**James Finney**

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 Fracher, c/o Abiding Grace Farms, 780 Bushlown 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

779 3666

The Society is pleased to announce that the National Stage Combat Workshop and the Advanced Teacher Training Program will once again be held on the campus of Memphis State University, July 18th to August 5th. The classroom facilities, workshop spaces, and most of all the Theatre Department personnel make it the ideal location for this event.

The tuition and fees for the National Stage Combat Workshop and the Advanced Teacher Training Program will be as follows:

**National Stage Combat Workshop  
\$750.00**

\$150.00 Non Refundable Deposit  
due May 1st  
\$600.00 Balance due June 1st

**Advanced Teacher Training  
Program \$800.00**

\$200.00 Non Refundable Deposit  
due May 1st  
\$600.00 Balance due June 1st

The staff looks forward to the return of Fight Master Erik Fredricksen who has taken two years off from the workshop to continue his acting career. Drew Fracher, Joseph Martinez, Allen Suddeth, David Leong, Patrick Crean and David Boushey will also serve as Master Teachers. The tentative assignment of instructors and their weapons are:

Allen Suddeth Rapier and Dagger  
Drew Fracher Broadsword  
David Leong Courtsword  
David Boushey Unarmed  
Erik Fredricksen Quarterstaff

Joseph Martinez will concentrate his time on the instruction of the participants in the Teacher Certification Program. The focus of this year's Workshop will be the training of the participants in the instruction of the five basic styles of fighting taught at the National Workshop. Each of the teachers will be trained to prepare their own students for the certification test as Actor Combatants.

Those interested in the Advanced Teacher Training Program should be Certified Actor Combatants of the Society or they may send a letter of recommendation from a Fight Master along with a videotape showing a full length fight performed at performance speed. to David Leong, the workshop coordinator.

To date I have received numerous requests for teaching assistants. I will be contacting those individuals and anyone else sending their requests to me in the next few weeks. Those people still interested in assisting should send me a letter of request, current resume, and a record of their stage combat training.

David Leong  
Coordinator, National Stage Combat  
Workshop  
35 West 45th St., Suite 600  
New York, New York 10036  
(212) 382-3535 (Service)  
(212) 576-1060

**David Leong**

## FILM COORDINATOR

I was pleased to accept the newly designated position of "film coordinator" for the Society at a recent meeting of the officers. I will be making every effort to incorporate the Society of American Fight Directors into the film industry and I intend to keep the membership abreast of my efforts through a regular series of articles to be printed in each issue of **The Fight Master**.

The emphasis I want to stress in this issue is the relationship between the Society and the various state film commissions or offices. Almost every state has a commission or film board. It is their job to promote films in their prospective states. Much revenue can be garnered via film, and many states are now spending large amounts of money to entice film companies to produce their films in the interested states. Some states are even "kicking back" money to film companies who opt to use their state (all of this being done in a legal ways). Some states such as Florida have film offices with budgets in the six figures to encourage production companies to use their state for all their film needs.

At present more than eighty percent of all films are independent and ninety percent of them are "run away" productions--that is they are doing their films "outside" of Hollywood on location in the various states and various countries throughout the world. Canada is doing a tremendous film business with their thirty percent offset on the dollar. We have little to say about those films being shot out of the country, but what about all those film commissions in the various states? We must approach these individuals and it is quite simple to do. Just look up the film commission in your state in the yellow pages. It will usually reside in the capitol city or the major city in a given state. Approach them with the Society in mind and inform them as to what we can do for them as experts in the business of action. Let them know that people exist out there who have substantial skills and who are local and do not have to be brought in from Los Angeles. Let them know we have "card

carrying" stuntmen in the Society as well as non-union experts who will not ask an arm and a leg of a production company.

Money is the name of the game and if we can show a producer that we can save him money as well as give him a first rate product, I can assure you we will find ourselves more and more involved with the film industry. Stunt organizations out of Los Angeles are bleeding producers dry, and these same producers are looking where they can save revenue. This is just one area where we can show them what services we have available and at what respectable costs. But first you must go through the various film offices to find out what films are coming into your area. Who is producing them and what is the contact numbers for the producers and production managers. Most state film representatives are interested in knowing who the local experts are in all areas of film production. You must get to know them!

State representatives like to show production companies who resides in their state and just how talented the "locals" are and what a savings it can be to a producer. Remember, it all has to do with money. Art is a dirty word and has no place in the film industry. Money and how to save it is what you should concern yourself with. If we all approached our various state film representatives we would go a long way in bringing the Society to the forefront in the ever increasing local film productions. This is the first priority for you. Let people know you exist and what you have to offer.

If you want to get more specific details about how to approach a film representative or a film producer, feel free to call me. I will be available to help you establish yourself and the Society in your given area. This is an important first step and I am confident we as an organization can have and will have a significant impact on the film industry in the near future.

**David Boushey**  
(206) 522-7001

# PATTON AND HIS SABER

by Charles Conwell

George S. Patton, famous for panache, pearl-handled pistols, and tanks, was also one of America's most prominent swordsmen. He occupies an important position in the age-old argument about the superiority of the cut or the thrust. He was the first U.S. officer to hold the title, Master of the Sword, and perhaps the last. His career, which culminated in the mechanized armoured fighting of World War II, began in the days of horse and saber.

Patton began fencing at West Point as a freshman in 1904. He studied both dueling sword (epee) and broadsword (cavalry saber). Broadsword practice was not the light contact sport that saber is today. Patton described his classwork in a letter to his father in 1908.

*I am the best or one of the best in the class with the broadsword. It is lots of fun and I practice it as much as possible. You should see the sparks fly on some of the parries also the blood if you chance to stick your ungarded left hand in the way. The other day I was fencing with a man who would not acknowledge my touches though they nearly knocked him down, so I tried a dueling cut not supposed to be used in fencing at the right wrist.. As a result he could not hold a pen for a day but will probably be a better sport in the future.*

(Blumenson, Vol. 1, 112)

In a letter to his future wife, Patton described a fencing victory over a professional member of a fencing club in New York.

*I think he was out of practice, still I was glad to beat him. Please pardon my boasting but...I would like so to be good with the sword.*

(Blumenson, Vol. 1, 143)

In 1912 Patton represented the U.S. Army in the Fifth Olympics held in Stockholm. His event, the Modern Pentathlon, included riding, pistol shooting, fencing, swimming, and running. It was based on a fictitious military scenario. A messenger rides, loses his horse, fires at the enemy, engages the enemy with sword when out of ammunition, swims a river, and runs to deliver the message. In fact, the five events are held on separate days. Overall, Patton placed fifth out of forty-two contestants. He ranked third in fencing and was the only competitor to give the fencing champion of the French army a loss. The weapon used was the epee, then called the dueling sword. Patton called it

*the rapier of history and the ancestor of all swords... The curved sabre is a hybrid, being a cross between the rapier and the scimitar and having the good qualities of neither.*

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 230)

Patton inquired of his fellow Olympic fencers in Stockholm about who was considered to be the best fencing master in Europe. The consensus named Cléry, Master of Arms and instructor of fencing at the Cavalry School in Saumur, France. He was the professional champion of Europe in the foil, saber, and dueling sword.

For two weeks following the Olympics, Patton studied saber and dueling sword with Cléry. For mounted combat Cléry stressed the thrust with the sabre rather than the cut commonly favored in US cavalry training. On his return to the U.S., Patton submitted the following conclusions to the Adjutant General:

*The whole French system of mounted saber fencing is concentrated in the word: "Attack!"*

*The recruit is taught little or no fencing mounted but he has the one idea to reach his adversary with the point hammered into him constantly and he spends much time running at dummies mounted.*

*It is argued that America being a country of axmen the edge comes more natural but from what I saw and was told the French recruit wants to use the edge just as much as ours do but it is drilled out of them...*

*Charging with the point gives the advantage of reaching the enemy at least a yard sooner than does ours, of presenting during the approach about one third of the human target, and of instilling the desire to speed up and hit hard...*

*For these reasons the French, English, and the Swedes are adopting straight swords or sabers.*

*The new French saber is straight with a blade 37" long and 1 1/2 " wide at the hilt. It has a cutting edge the whole length and is an ideal cutting weapon being at the same time perfectly adapted for pointing which is indeed its first purpose.*

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 234)

Patton's weeks with Cléry were decisive in the development of the Patton Saber, US model 1913, and the last sword manufactured for combat in the United States. Under Cléry's influence Patton reversed the emphasis on cutting in American cavalry swordsmanship.

Patton aggressively promoted the adoption of a straight saber and training that would emphasize the thrust almost to the exclusion of cutting and parrying. He circulated quotations from the British Cavalry **Sword and Saber Notes**, 1911, and his own translation of the French Cavalry **Drill Instructions** of the same year.

*In the melee...the troopers single out their adversaries seeking especially the officers. They attack with the point, shouting "Thrust, Thrust."*

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 248)

On February 24th, the Secretary of War ordered the Ordinance Department to manufacture twenty thousand cavalry sabers according to a model designed by Patton. The Patton blade was thirty five inches long and one and one eighth inch wide at the hilt, two inches shorter and an eighth of an inch narrower than the

French saber that impressed Patton at Saumur. The overall length of the new saber was forty two-inches.

*The blade is straight, tapering, and double edged, with a deep central fuller on either side running within five inches of the point...The grip is made of steel roughened in a diamond pattern for greater traction. There is an indentation for the thumb on the top of the grip...The guard is a single heavy sheet of steel moulded in a full basket with three ridges in the area of the knuckle-bow. Both the grip and the guard are blackened. The scabbard is of khaki webbing with a blackened steel tip and throat. Two fixed rings on either side of the throat provide the means for attachment to the saddle. It was never worn on the person by an enlisted man.*

(Peterson, 36)

Patton was dispatched to the Springfield Arsenal in Massachusetts for three days to make sure that the saber was being manufactured to his specifications.

In March, 1913, issue of **Cavalry Journal**, Patton amplified his previous article on the history, shape, and use of the saber:

*...the new light cavalry was mostly armed with a curved saber. The weapon adopted was, however, an unintelligent copy. The scimitar of the oriental was a special tool adapted for cutting through defensive clothing made of wool wadding and to be used in combats when the opposing horseman fought in open formations circling each other and not in ordered lines trusting to shock.*

*The sword given to most of the light cavalry troops was not of sufficient curvature to give the saw-like cut of the scimitar and yet was curved sufficiently to reduce its efficiency for pointing. It may be noted that the scimitar was not used for parrying and could not be, having neither guard nor balance. All the parrying was done with a light shield. But this lack of balance and the curved form of the weapon must not be considered as essential to a cutting weapon, for the long, straight, cross-handled sword of the Crusader has a most excellent balance, about two inches from the guard. Yet this weapon was probably the one of all time capable of striking the hardest blow.*

*The present saber of our cavalry is almost the last survival of the incorrect applictaion of the mechanics of the scimitar. It is not a good cutting weapon, being difficult to move rapidly. It is not a good pointing weapon, being curved sufficiently to throw the point out of line.*

(Patton, "Form," 753)

In the summer of 1913 Patton received permission to return to Samur and continue his studies with Clery for six weeks before reporting to the Mounted Service School at Fort Riley, Kansas, on October 1st. At the end of their time together, Clery presented Patton with a picture of himself in fencing attire inscribed in French "to my best pupil."

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 262)

At Fort Riley, Second Lieutenant Patton was both a cavalry student and a sword instructor. His title was Master of the Sword. Many of his students were superior officers. While he taught, he wrote a manual for the use of the new saber published in March, 1914, as **Saber Exercise**. He announced his philosophy on the first page.

*The saber is solely a weapon of offense and is used in conjunction with the other offensive weapon, the horse. In all the training, the idea of speed must be conserved. No direct parries are taught, because at the completion of a parry the enemy is already beyond the reach of attack. The surest parry is a disabled opponent.*

*In the charge and in the melee, the trooper must remember that on the speed of his horse in attack, and on his own offensive spirits, rest ninety-ninths of his chances of success.*

(Patton, Saber Exercise, 5)

Instruction began on foot with the feet twenty four inches apart, the knees bent, and the left hand holding an imaginary bridle six inches in front of the belt buckle.

*Instruction on foot teaches the mechanism of the use of the saber without embarrassing the trooper with the control of the horse. Its chief purpose is to increase the reach, teach accuracy and quickness, and above all, to make the thrust instinctive.*

(Patton, Saber Exercise, 5)

The manual details a course of instruction that progresses from the exercises on foot, to mounted charges over obstacles and against dummies, to full scale combat with masks and dull exercise sabers. A trooper who was touched was required to raise his saber and leave the designated area. Perhaps remembering his opponent at West Point, Patton wrote

*A man who does not admit touches should be tried (by court martial) or in some other way have his sensibilities awakened.*

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 207)

Patton taught five guards and five thrusts from those guards: right front (also the position of charge saber), left front, right, left, and right rear. Because a cavalry man cannot thrust effectively to his left rear, he was taught when attacked from this vulnerable direction to turn his horse sharply to the right and attack his pursuer from the right front. Troopers were taught to disregard the saber of the enemy and concentrate fully on lunging at his body. Patton believed that the power of the lunge combined with a twist of the wrist to the right would deflect the enemy's saber to the outside. Patton gives special attention to the deflection of the lance.

*In attacking a lancer, a rapid approach is even more important than against a swordsman. The only moment of danger is when the point of the lance comes within the first reach of the fully extended saber. If, at that moment the swordsman lunges, forcing the lance to the outside, he is safe and the lancer is at his mercy.*

(Patton, Saber Exercise, 23)

This is the combined parry and attack in one tempo of rapier days.

In June 1915, Patton published the **The Diary of the Instructor of Swordsmanship**. He repeated the importance of the saber as an offensive weapon. The saber was

*not for individual defense...The men must be impressed with the idea that the proper defense is a transfixing opponent.*

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 206)

In 1916 the Cavalry Board of Equipment considered replacing the 1913 saber with a curved weapon. Patton vigorously defended the weight, length, shape, and balance of the weapon he designed. The distribution of weight

*was very carefully arranged to give maximum effect to the charge with the point and to the lunge...In this particular the present saber is the superior of any existing weapon in the hands of foreign nations.*

(Blumenson, Vol 1, 312)

He cited the effective cutting power of the straight swords used by medieval knights, Scottish highlanders, Rupert and Cromwell in the English Civil War, Charles XII, and Peter the Great. He quoted numerous historical advocates of the point including Napoleon.

*At Wagram, when the cavalry of the guard passed in review before a charge, Napoleon called to them: "Don't cut! the point! the point!"*

(Patton, "Form," 754)

Changes were not made in Patton's saber!

Patton's career as Master of the Sword ended in 1914 soon after Pancho Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico, and killed seventeen Americans. Patton was assigned to the 8th Cavalry at Fort Bliss, Texas. He describes a regimental review in a letter to his wife.

*It was a fine sight all with sabers drawn and all my sabers.. It gives you a thrill and my eyes filled with tears...*

*It is the call of one's ancestors and the glory of combat. It seems to me that at the head of a regiment of cavalry any thing would be possible...*

(Blumenson, Vol. 1, 297)

Patton's dreams were soon to be frustrated. On Thanksgiving Day, 1914, he was ordered to attack a band of eighty Mexicans who were camped on the American side of the Rio Grande. Patton planned a saber charge at dawn. His immediate superiors ordered the sabers to be left at the fort. The Mexicans were not found and his men returned after eleven hours in the saddle. During this campaign Patton and ten soldiers traveling in three automobiles shot and killed a well-known Villista officer and two of his comrades. This was the first time that a U.S. Army unit



had motored into action. The days of the saber were in decline and mechanized warfare was born. Patton remained an interesting theorist in fighting with the sword. He became a monumentally successful practitioner of modern mobile warfare.

In April, 1934, the Adjutant General's Office discontinued the saber as an item of issue to the cavalry and completely discarded it as a weapon. By this time Patton was involved in the development of the U.S. Tank Corp and the demise of the saber passed without his documented comment. However, when asked by the Cavalry Board in 1941 about the retention of the saber, he replied in length.

*A cold steel weapon is not only desirable but vitally necessary.*

*Very few people have ever been killed with the bayonet or the saber but the fear of having their guts explored with cold steel in the hands of battle-maddened men has won many a fight.*

(Blumenson, Vol 2, 21)

Patton suggested that cold steel teaches aggression, the will to close with an enemy.

*Only cold steel provides this will, for to use such a weapon, one MUST close.(Emphasis mine).*

(Blumenson, Vol. 2, 21)

Patton never used his saber in battle, but he demonstrated in World War II this will to charge the enemy with the tanks and half-tracks that earned his armoured cavalry the name "Hell on Wheels."

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## THE METAPHYSICS OF STAGE COMBAT

by Mark Olsen

*Relationship with the tool gives the workman his skill, and a long apprenticeship is needed to master a tool...but mastery is not merely something that is reached...rather, mastery is an opening to an inner world in which a new authority and new qualities can begin to be felt.*

Michael Donner  
The Way of Working

Gather any number of stage fighters to look at a set of weapons and one will hear them enthusiastically comparing the qualities of each weapon. The size, form and relative beauty will be fervently discussed. They'll assess the hilt shape or blade width or quality of the finish. Visual evaluation, however, can only go so far and true assessment must therefore involve handling of the weapons. It is only then that the invisible qualities can be revealed--qualities like weight, balance, or sound.,

Reactions will, of course, vary according to individual tastes (although I suspect a superior weapon would win unanimous praise). And the interesting thing to me, aside from the appraisals themselves, is the fact that taste, the sense of discernment, depends entirely upon the internal world of the combatant. And at this stage, we have shifted--ever so slightly--from the ordinary into what often is considered to be the extraordinary world of metaphysics.

Today's experts in the body/mind field of metaphysics, while differing on a wide variety of subjects, at least agree on the idea that man's motor function is intimately linked with his mental and emotional growth. This idea is most strongly supported by the work of F. M. Alexander, Moshe Feldenkrais, Ilana Rubenfield, and an ever growing number of researchers in this field.

The recent wave of interest in the subject, however, tends to shadow the fact that the importance of motor function to psychological health has long been a factor in many ancient spiritual traditions. Sacred dances, yogic postures, and many prayer rituals were used, at least in part, to train the kinesthetic system. In fact, most martial arts disciplines, aside from the obvious defense attributes, were designed to strengthen the organs, train the muscles, and coordinate body and mind. This coordination refined the nervous system as a prelude to spiritual work. Spiritual involvement could not progress in earnest unless the nervous system was properly aligned. And this translates as being psychologically healthy (or metaphysically fit).

Don Ahn, a Taoist Master in New York, teaches Tai Chi sword, for example, not only as a defense, but as a preparation for painting and calligraphy. The transformation that occurs with each student in this process is a function of ordinary life, but is considered metaphysical because it cannot be seen or scientifically

quantified. The world is actually full of ordinary processes which are considered mysterious because they defy comprehension through observation alone.

The inventor, Itzak Bentov, in his book Stalking the Wild Pendulum, gives an analogy to describe the metaphysical dimension of ordinary experience. He suggests we show a bicycle to someone who has never seen one and try to convince them that it is a safe and practical conveyance. Naturally they will take one look and think you are joking; The bicycle to them looks like a very unstable contraption. Explanations will, of course, be useless. It is only through learning how to ride it that they will see its merits. They might then realize that previously they had missed the invisible principle of inertia that keeps the bicycle upright when in motion.

The handling of a stage weapon or even the timing of good hand to hand stage combat, also relies on invisible laws. And, like learning to ride a bike, it is only through practice, trial and error, guidance, and clarity of intent, that the invisible laws can come to be known or "embodied." Unlike the bicycle, however, laws of stage combat return to the ether if not kept in constant rapport.

It might seem odd to apply a spiritual dimension to something as irreverent as stage fighting. The depiction of violence and brutality seems entirely non-spiritual. The people involved seem to be rogues, wenches, and rascals; the most unlikely candidates for spiritual work it might seem. But, as I have come to learn, nothing is as it seems.

A teacher of mine once said, "anything can be used as a key, one just needs to find the lock." And actually, this is the central notion motivating many spiritual practices; particularly in Zen Buddhism. Whether arranging flowers, raking leaves, painting, or shooting archery, the Zen adept is using the activity as a key in hope of unlocking his or her true self. How? By applying the fundamental principle known as "mindfulness."

Mindfulness is the effortless yet full involvement in whatever activity is occurring at the moment. This includes brushing one's teeth, driving a car, making love, or simply sitting still. Our minds usually chatter incessantly into the past or future, unable to commit to the present. In Zen, this distracted state is seen as a major hindrance to man's full development.

Mindfulness is therefore a practice to still the chattering mind. When practiced sincerely, it produces very striking results. One can especially see the results in Zen art forms such as pottery, painting, garden design, calligraphy and much, much more.

The true result, however, does not depend on the visible product. In fact, there is a Zen master who, when working with his students, would often have them paint on the surface of a flowing river; illustrating clearly the idea that one should not become attached to the outer result; it is the inner process that matters.

The ultimate aim of the inner process has many names and shapes according to each culture or belief system. Nearly all, however, adhere to a notion of salvation whereby the soul passes from corporeal existence into an exalted non-corporeal "beyond."

This transition is usually preceded by surrender to a much higher law.

Now, it is no secret that the Spaniards hoped to codify and put into practice a system of swordplay based on cosmic laws. They no doubt relied upon elements of sacred geometry, Kabbalistic numerology, astrological configurations, and other devices in an attempt to reach this goal. Unfortunately, it proved entirely too cumbersome and obviously no match against an opponent who fought with instinct, free of codified restraints. As usual, intentions to conscribe cosmic law with the finite limits of man's rational mind, however well conceived, were doomed to fail in the face of the infinite dynamics of life.

The Spaniards, poor fellows, actually might have been on to something. Regretfully, for them, they fell into the trap that seems to snare most efforts of this nature: They became dazzled by their own reflections and failed to see the invisible function that was at hand. It was too simple for their zealous tastes and therefore escaped them.

And here it is, the function they missed and that unites nearly all religious practices, all art, music, science, and the essential ingredient for any human development--an aspect of consciousness so simple as to render it almost invisible. Its use and growth, in all fields, is mankind's most powerful tool. It is simply: focus of attention.

All meditations, prayers, chants, dances, drawings, painting, pieces of music, writing, sculpture, carpentry,--virtually all of culture--makes use of this function. But it is so "under the nose" it becomes invisible (like finally realizing you are allergic to kleenex)! And here we are again, back to the earlier concept of mindfulness.

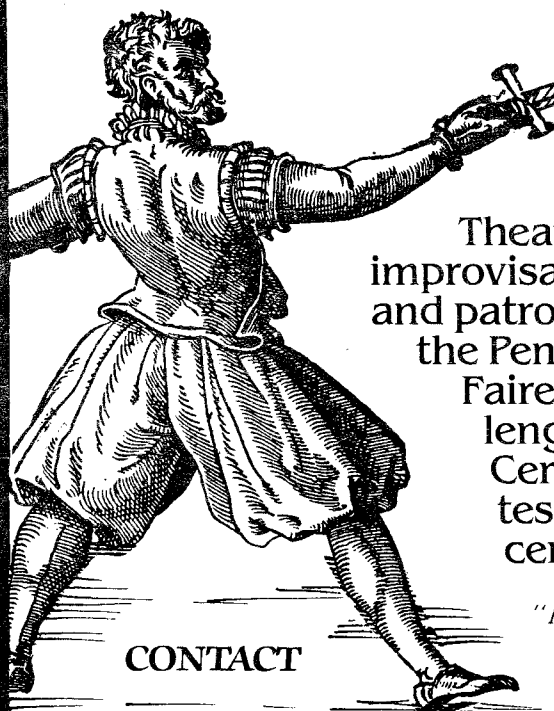
Had the Spaniards used their system to train the attention, creating a springboard into a clear state of awareness, they might have revolutionized swordplay. Instead, they got cut to ribbons and were forced to abandon their invention.

Karate Master Dale Kirby, during his stay at the National Stage Combat Workshop this past summer, often referred to the importance of being in the moment, in life as well as the martial arts. He is, as most of us observed, the living embodiment of that idea. And much of what he has achieved is an obvious result of his highly developed focus of attention. As aspiring stage fighters, it is important to learn from his example and apply the principles to our own lives. Therein rests the "spirit" of our art. Whatever belief systems we may adhere to, the aspect of "mindfulness" in our work and creativity must certainly be present. And as a skill begins to develop, it will have the tendency to enhance one's overall attitude toward life. Masters from all endeavors agree that at some point their work creates them as much as they create their work.

So even something as irreverent as stage fighting could, if so desired, be used to focus the attention, channel aggressions, balance the mind and body, and ultimately provide an opening into the deep qualities of compassion and the positive destiny of the soul. And it need not be codified, ritualized, or formalized in any way.

Then, when an assembly of people sit (with focused attention) to watch a rousing, creative, action-packed fight, they will sense somewhere deep inside the beauty of elevating man's warlike nature to an art form which transcends brutality; thus proving what martial artists have always known: the enemy is not martial energy, it is ignorance. And when theatre exposes ignorance, the veil is momentarily lifted, preparing the way for a destiny more suited to humanity's higher aims.

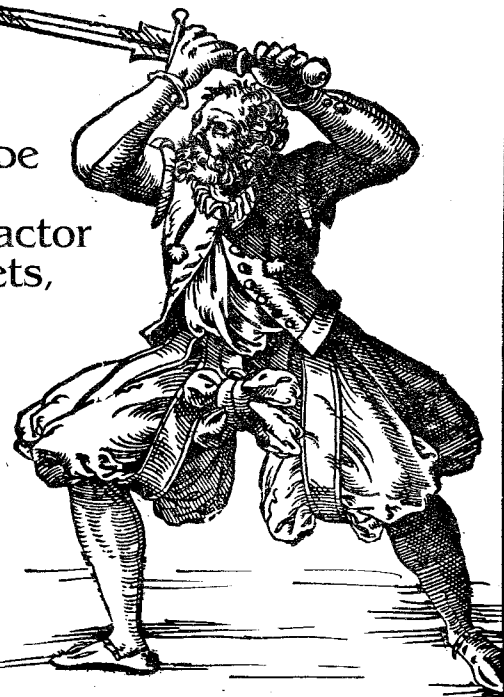
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# WHEN STYLES COLLIDE:

## BLADES OF EAST AND WEST

by T. J. Glenn

Recently I was stunt coordinator/fight choreographer for a television pilot. This gave me very direct reason to explore the east versus west debate close up. The pilot was called **Midnight Warriors** and was to contain fights between a western style fencer, a ninja-to stylist and a kenjitsu expert.

Since these three sword styles have had little historic or theatrical contact, staging the fights was a chore. Additionally, little information was available as to their relative strengths and weaknesses.

Aside from some east/west confrontations on the old T.V. series **Kung Fu** (none of which involved sword to sword work) and the movie **Red Sun** (where again sword to sword was ignored) my research uncovered only three instances of western versus eastern sword styles. Oddly enough, all were Japanese versus European and two out of three were light sabers versus katana. In **Shogun** Richard Chamberlain briefly used a katana (maybe four cuts) as if it were a western rapier against a ninja's blade. In **Sword of Heaven** a light cavalry saber was used (and pretty badly at that) against a "magical" katana at the end of the film. In **The Bushido Blade** Frank Converse fought Sonichi (Sonny) Chiba saber to katana in a match of honor.

This poor theatrical list left me with precious little visual reference so I started cracking the books for clues. Here again I found little historical evidence of the collision of styles since most travellers who recorded confrontations were not fencing masters or, in many cases, were not actually present when soldiers boasted of their exploits. Alternately, the Japanese were shot before reaching sword range.

Therefore, I was left to my own resources to test weapons for their strengths and weaknesses and then to match them up in simulated sparring. From this information came my choreography. Here is some of what I learned:

The least commonly known weapon (to the western public) is the western sword I chose for the hero, the small sword. The script originally called for a Prussian military saber but I felt that since the saber/katana combination had been done by some of the above mentioned films, the small sword would give the fights a freshness and a look which no one had ever seen before. In fact, it may have been the first time the three weapons have ever crossed in combat (albeit choreographed).

The small sword (or court sword or walking sword) was the direct descendant of the rapier (circa 1480 A.D. to roughly 1655 A.D.) and parent of the modern fencing epee. It was the direct result of improvements in the swordmaker's art, battlefield technological advances and better steel. The heavy broad-bladed rapier (not the wispy epee blade substitute used for the Errol Flynn films) was narrowed and, as an accommodation to everyday wear, shortened to facilitate wearing in the crowded cities.

This meant that from the sometimes five foot (yes five feet of cold steel) length of the rapier, the blade length of the small sword shrank to an average of thirty two inches. The blade shape started as a junior copy of the rapier blade in the 1650s and went through several changes in an effort to both lighten and strengthen the blade. The Colichemarde blade was square at the base (forte) and became diamond shaped (in cross section) near the tip. This evolved into a completely diamond cross sectioned blade for the whole length.

It was this "diamond" small sword which became the pattern for so many of the military presentation swords we have today. It was a thrust and cut weapon which was used primarily for point attacks but had sharpened edges that could deliver a fatal cut just as easily. It was this period of small sword I chose for the hero of **Midnight Warriors** because of the flexibility of style it afforded. Later the walking sword became the epee de combat and developed a triangular blade with no edges. While this is quite deadly (a two inch penetration of a point is almost always more fatal than a slash, and triangular wounds don't heal well), it also means that the fighting style would leave little room for the swashbuckling the audience would expect to see in a sword fight--and I'd just as soon not use a weapon incorrectly.

Since much has already been written about the katana or Samurai sword, I shall be brief with its story. It is a curved single edged weapon used primarily with two hands, which, like all Japanese blades was designed to cut on the draw. It was almost exclusively a cutting/slashing sword. It also had a point and was used for very effective lunge attacks, particularly in the late nineteenth century when confronted with the bayonets of western style standing armies.

Many of these swords were family heirlooms and were made with perhaps the finest pattern welding craftsmanship in the world. Today there are still many Ryu or schools of kenjitsu (the use of the katana). In the past, however, when each clan had its own school and secret tricks--tricks that could mean the difference in a duel and so were carefully guarded--there were literally several hundred different styles.

The third sword in the pilot script was a ninja's sword, properly called a ninja-to. This was a straight, generally crudely made piece of steel roughly thirty inches long with one cutting edge and a point. It was straight, because the characteristic curve of the katana required a complex forging process that made them too expensive (and traceable) for the generally poorer ninja clans to afford. Also, a straight blade served the ninja's purpose just fine.

Unlike both the small sword and the katana (which were both class symbols as well as weapons), the ninja-to was a utilitarian tool. As such its handguard (tsuba) was square to provide a foot rest for climbing. Also, when the sword was set down it would not roll, which created noise (practical people those ninja).

The ninja's sword was made for alley fighting, easy carrying and concealment and for throwing (as a last ditch defense, of course). It was foremost a tool and a close range weapon. As such, it had shorter length as an advantage against the sword of the samurai, historically. If a ninja could not avoid conflict, could not hide or flee, he would come to close quarters with his opponent, his

thrusting point and shorter blade allowing him to get inside the samurai's guard. Because of the poor nature of the steel in his sword the ninja employed a saw-like push pull with his cut. This also facilitated a deeper cut since his blade did not have the weight of a full swing behind it to penetrate.

The ninja-movie technique of holding the sword in a reverse position with an underhanded grip was only used on rare occasions, because 1)it gave little power in a cut and was thus only used for face and throat slashes and 2)it shortens the effective cutting arc of the blade by almost half--a silly thing to do in almost every situation. The reverse technique was used in the dark of night to hide the glinting blade behind the ninja's body so he could slash quickly and with the element of surprise on his side or in the extreme confines of a narrow alley or overgrown woods where the full swing of even the short ninja-to would be hampered by the overgrowth. It is a technique which has been seized on and used to excess in most films featuring ninja, and so I avoided using it in **Midnight Warriors** altogether.

Before it came time to compose the choreography for the scenes and actually have the hero and villains cross blades I set myself and my fight crew to sparring with the blades to see how they matched up. Here is what we found:

The lengths of the ninja-to and small sword made them comparable distance weapons and we discovered that while the two handed grip of the ninja-to gave it superiority for beats on the blade, the one handed grip and the western lunge-advance step gave the small sword a point advantage and a quicker riposte (counter-attack).

This quicker response to attack proved to be the deciding factor in the engagements, for even if beat out of line by the ninja-to, the slight, swift small sword was able to bring its point into play and end the match (and the ninja).

All the above was purely based on blade work, but since ninjas never stick to the rules we had our ninja use kicks and grappling in the fight as well. Fortunately the hero of the show is a master of multiple western fighting arts, among them Boxing Francaise. This means that he can fight it out with the ninja kick for kick.

Here also, the one-handed grip on the small sword allowed the left hand free for grabs and punches, leaving our two fighters matched slightly in favor of the western fighter. One interesting tactic we discovered was that when the two blades were in corp de corp (blades locked up) with the sharp edge of the ninja-to downward, all the western fighter had to do was place his left hand on the false edge of the ninja sword and press low out of the way. Meanwhile he brought his own sword over the top at the ninja's face. The ninja had no similar surface to grab on the small sword.

The katana man fared better in this limited sparring. The greater length and weight of his blade (and greater resulting power) made approaching close enough to strike with the small sword a risky business. The katana's curve does limit its lunge capabilities somewhat but not enough to count against the samurai.

The katana proved impossible to parry by direct opposition (as many G.I. riflemen discovered in World War II) but the same



deflection parries used by kenjitsuist are part of the small sword arsenal as well as beat parries. The katana's two handed grip made attacks against the blade, such as beats or envelopment, all but useless.

The katana technique had only one major flaw which the small sword fighter could exploit. This was the arc of its swing. If it missed in a cut, a quick man with a small sword could easily make a stop hit (direct lunge) to a vital spot before the samurai could recover. Even a slower man could make a pricking attack, with a quick cut on the sword arm and retreat (given the space). He could then continue in that fashion while blood loss weakened and slowed the samurai until a stop thrust could be made.

This strategy has a lot of historical precedent and is the main reason that the small sword replaced the heavier rapiers of the earlier era. My partners and I found that just as the ninja chose to come to close quarters to inhibit the deadly swing of the samurai's swords so too the small sword man had to be aggressive and move in at the first opportunity, pressing the samurai with short thrusts and cuts to gain advantage. The combat logic of "get in close and neutralize his reach" holds true even with blades.

The script had the western stylist win so I utilized this distance flaw in the samurai techniques to give the victory logical weight. More important than solving the immediate problem of the pilot, I discovered some interesting things about the collisions of styles. Namely, that there is no style which is flawless, no technique, eastern or western so complete that a counter can not be found. In fact I reaffirmed the old truism. What the mind of one man can invent, the minds of other men can improve on. And location, and cultural factors create no obstacle that those minds can not overcome.

## **SWORDBELTS AND FROGS:**

### **ALL-PURPOSE STYLES YOU CAN MAKE**

**by Rod Casteel**

It occurs to me that it is a rare thing to see proper swordbelts and related weapon accessory items in stage productions today. When rapier and epee-bladed facsimiles are used, I have observed a total absence of scabbards for these weapons. While this might seem "unimportant," it never feels quite right to an actor. Epees, in particular, have an unfortunate tendency to be hilt-heavy and will fall hilt-down and point-up unless carried in a scabbard. In fact, a number of difficulties manifest themselves when facing the prospect of carrying/wearing weapons throughout a stage performance. I don't doubt that you've been aware of some of these.

On the other hand, I feel that the advantages of adequate weapon accessories are fairly significant:

1. Actor confidence is improved; (the weapons are much less inclined to be a distraction at the wrong time).
2. Better definition of character attitude.
3. The potential for added character "business" and authentic ritualism in terms of the relationship between oneself, one's weapons, and (their) component accessories.
4. Enhanced dramatic values (such as: the "rasp" of steel against steel as a blade is drawn from its scabbard)!
5. A more comfortable relationship between the actor and his/her weapons during NON-COMBAT scenes (i.e., quality and sureness of movement and physical carriage are improved).
6. Greater historic accuracy and the satisfaction that what one is presenting is made more true-to-life for the period being depicted.

All of the above adds up to a whole new awareness and perspective on weaponry, and it is just possible that you might discover some things about weapons and their function that you didn't previously know. If you've never had the experience of working with complete gear, it should answer questions which may have occurred to you from time to time. For example:

**Q:** How does one manage to sit in a chair while wearing a sword and/or dagger? (After all, you can't sit ON them!)

**A:** The DAGGER is the lesser problem, as it can be shifted on the belt if necessary. As to the SWORD, it may be necessary to remove the entire belt and weapon if it is a large sword. For the rapier/epee, remove the sword and scabbard as ONE unit from frog

and belt before sitting down. Then treat the weapon as if it were a cane.

In a combat situation which allows time and ritual for preparation, the entire belt or baldric (shoulder belt) may be removed (with scabbard, if any is used). Or, as with sitting down, remove only sword and scabbard as ONE, then draw the sword and discard the scabbard.

**Q:** What if there is no time to discard belt or scabbard before engaging in combat?

**A:** When there is only enough time to draw one's sword and fight, the scabbard must be held and controlled with the LEFT HAND (particularly when the scabbard is STIFF rather than FLEXIBLE). A flexible scabbard can be largely "ignored," while a stiff scabbard is very capable of causing you to trip.

**Q:** What about the same situation (above) with both SWORD and DAGGER?

**A:** If possible, make disposal of the SCABBARD the top priority. If this is not feasible, the actor must be aware of the scabbard and take care not to trip over it while fighting. Also, never fall ON the scabbard if it is of the stiff type. A "soft" scabbard would not be problematic to wear while fighting with both hands engaged.

As you can see, the variety of circumstances and situations dictates a new set of problems when complete gear is used; but, the "new" set of problems has solutions. Discovering these can even be fun. All of the maneuvers above should be practiced until familiarity and adeptness are achieved. So, play around with it and see what works best for you. And, the next time you're able to watch an Errol Flynn (or other such) film, take care to observe how these things are handled.

Moving on to the area of historic accuracy, happily we seem to have advanced at least to the point where the generic cup-hilt epee is no longer acceptable as the universal, all-purpose "rapier." I find this sort of progress encouraging. It seems to indicate that the lack of correct period equipment is probably not due to lack of desire for authentic detailing; rather, I suspect it is due to a general lack of information and know-how in terms of how such gear is constructed and how it should look. Such information is not always readily obtainable.

My proposition is this: picture an actor in a wonderfully detailed Elizabethan costume. Now imagine that the same actor presents himself onstage in his BARE FEET (because, you see, there is some problem about providing him with proper footwear). So, we just OMIT footwear from his costume and this is our "solution." Does this really "work?!" I'm sure you will agree that it does not. This is exactly how I feel when I see a play with beautiful costumes and swords...but NO scabbards, frog (hangers), nor reasonably proper swordbelts. Often, what I do see is a sash or waist-belt with the sword thrust through it. At first glance, this may seem a small thing, but it always leaves me feeling just a bit

"cheated" (and acutely aware of the problems and discomfort of the actors)...about the same way you'd feel if the actors wore tennis shoes with otherwise gorgeous period costumes. The impact is lost.

As members of the Society of American Fight Directors, we are all "combat-conscious." Of course, weapons are a very important part of most combat scenes. That we all share a degree of awareness of weaponry is inevitable. Yet, I get the feeling that "weapons-consciousness" may be a secondary consideration for some of us. Again, this may have to do with lack of availability of certain items, insufficient knowledge (perhaps coupled with insufficient skills) as to how to construct these items ourselves, and the belief that these items would be excessively expensive even if we COULD build or buy them..

As a sword-maker, I have a fair knowledge of these things. Since I feel it is non-constructive to offer only criticism when I am able to offer ideas and answers for these problems, it struck me that I should do something about it. It is my sincere hope that I might inspire you to set, by example, a more credible visual standard for the stage...by starting with your own gear. It IS up to us to possess and to disseminate correct information about our chosen field of endeavor. Only in this way can we continue to command the respect due to true professionals.

So...first, I would like to debunk the idea that YOU "can't afford" to outfit yourself properly with swordbelts and frogs. Not only is it possible for you to make up your own correctly styled period swordbelts and hangers...it is EASY and ECONOMICAL, as you will see:

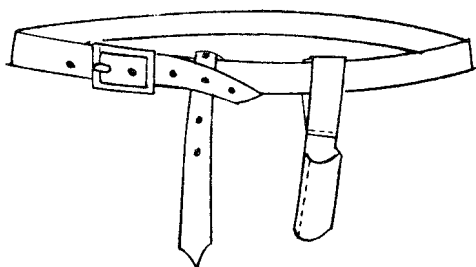


Figure 1

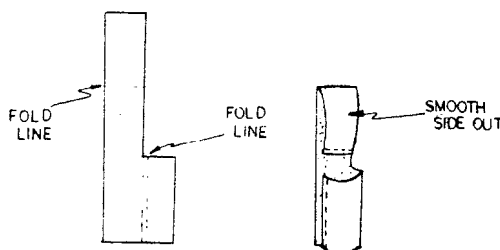


Figure 1-A

Figure 1-B

First, for a good ALL-PURPOSE BELT & HANGER which works well with any (standard length) "cross-hilt" sword, see Figure 1. The belt should be of heavy leather with a plain harness buckle, width about or nearly two inches wide, and large (or extended) sizes are best. They will fit almost anyone and the overlong end can be "tucked" in the medieval style (as shown). I

know what you're thinking: "Won't the belt be EXPENSIVE!" Answer: NOT if you acquire the habit of searching for such things at your local thrift/second-hand stores. When you do, you needn't expect to pay more than two dollars for a sturdy belt with buckle. (While you're there, look for a second belt about one inch wide, as this is what you'll be using to construct your "Elizabethan" sword-girdle).

For the HANGER on the first belt, you need a piece of leather about five to six inches wide and about fourteen to sixteen inches long (See Fig. 1-A). The HANGER should be made separate from the belt in case you want to use it on another belt. It should also be made to hold the sword vertically and must be loose enough for easy withdrawal of the weapon.

ASSEMBLY of hanger: Use rivets or (even better) buy a STITCHING AWL from Tandy Leather Company. It's easy to use and you'll find many purposes for it. The cost is about four dollars. (NOTE: If you use NYLON thread, finish a series of stitches with a knot, burn the thread ends, and press flat with an awl handle while hot. Nylon thread lasts a long time!). See Fig. 1-B

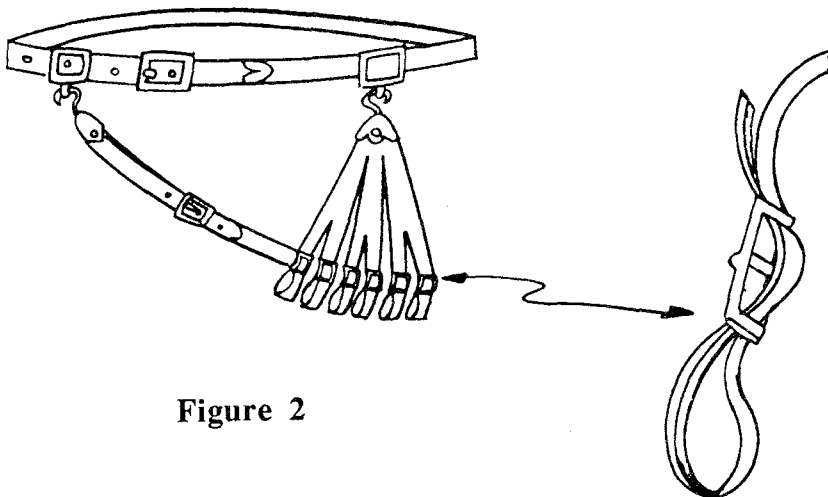
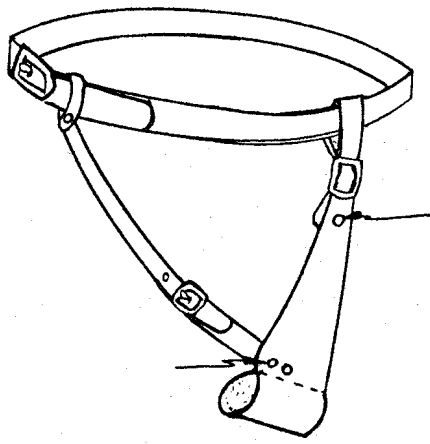


Figure 2

Now see Figure 2 for a detail of an historically correct "Elizabethan sword-girdle." The example shows exactly how an original was designed and constructed. The problem is: this style requires special hardware which is not generally available. (I plan to offer KITS of such hardware in the near future, but we will have to make it up ourselves). Meanwhile, I have offered a simplified version of the same design. It will read onstage just like the more detailed original, but you can make the simpler version yourself.

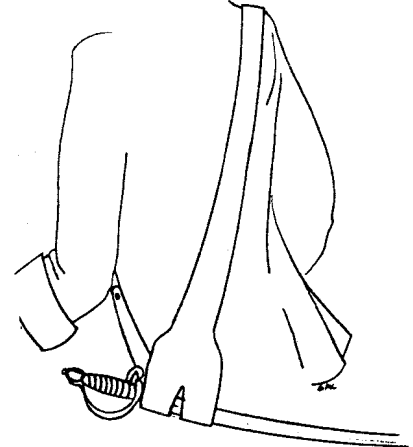
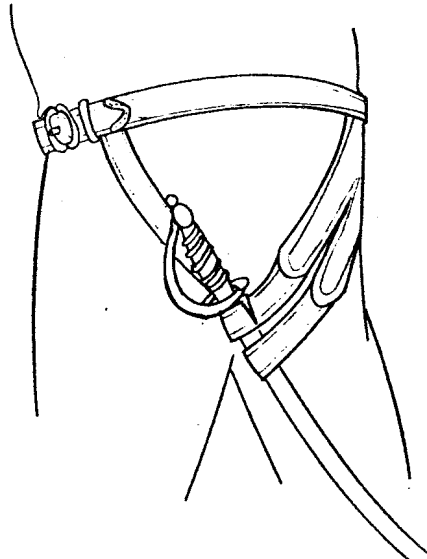
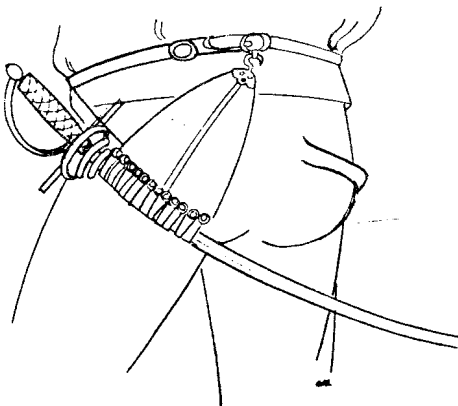


**Figure 3**

See Figure 3 for the **THEATRICAL (SIMPLIFIED) PATTERN** (this actually has a **PRE-Elizabethan** look which will also work for later period). The **FROG** loops over the belt and down through the friction slider, attaching below it. (**FRICTION SLIDER**: a buckle **WITHOUT** a "tongue."). Points 1,2,3,& 4 are secured with **RIVETS**. To further simplify this design, the friction slider and the small buckle (on frog and small strap, respectively) **CAN** be omitted and the same look will be maintained for theatrical use.

Illustrations A, B, & C (based on **European and American Arms** by Claude Blair, Bonanza Books, New York, 1962). show three basic styles of swordbelts and how they were worn. Style A is an Elizabeth Sword-Girdle, circa 1570; style B is a swordbelt in the style of the seventeenth century; and, style C is a **BALDRIC** or shoulder belt of the seventeenth century.

Now you know enough to create credible swordbelts. The interesting thing about knowledge of any kind is that it has worth only when shared with others and put to use. I find that theatre production people desire this knowledge. **WE** should be the ones who provide it. By doing so, we enhance our credibility and the credibility of the Society of American Fight Directors



## TOUCHÉ UNLIMITED

Touché Unlimited is one year old and has been doing incredible things for fight choreography on the West Coast. Besides training students in stage combat in the Bay Area with their regular sessions, they have also conducted two Swashbuckling Intensives which were two day workshops dealing with a number of weapons. Touché did the choreography for the premiere of **The Very Last Lover of the River Cane** for San Jose Repertory Theatre and they staged the 1946 prison break-out on Alcatraz Island. They have worked with and for Placido Domingo on **The Tales of Hoffman** at the San Francisco Opera and **Macbeth** at the Los Angeles Opera. Chris Villa and John Robert Beardsley, the two fight masters in the organization, worked on the **Conan** show at Universal Studios in Los Angeles. Chris Villa is working on **Romeo and Juliet** at Ashland this year. There have been national radio and television interviews and numerous articles written about this exciting swashbuckling company.

Touché's mission is to promote historically accurate stage combat. They have taken the acting out of stage combat and yet have been able to maintain a historical accuracy in their work. This is partly done by instilling in the students a respect for the sword and an awareness that the sword has sharp points and edges. Once the student has endowed the weapon with these attributes, he handles and respects the sword as a potentially lethal weapon. The student learns how to live the fight which expands the choreographic potential. Touché puts a professional focus on both the aesthetics and safety of brilliantly choreographed stage combat.

In keeping with their mission of historical accuracy, Touché also sells and rents state of the art equipment that is combat worthy historical replicas.

This spring Touché will be conducting interviews and auditions in Milwaukee and Massachusetts for their performance company which will be doing a major fight show with an internationally known playwright. Those interested in auditioning should send a photo and resume to Touché Unlimited, 761 Colusa, El Cerrito, California 94530. You may call (415) 525-8290 or (415) 526-3755 for further information.

At the end of June, Touché will be involved with the **International Academy of the Sword** for two to three weeks in Madrid Spain. Oscar Kolombatovich, the world's foremost historian on the use of the sword will be lecturing and teaching at the workshop and William Hobbs, of cinema fame, has also expressed an interest in support of the workshop which will involve advanced training in fencing, sword building, horseback riding and other theatrical projects. The company will then travel around Spain performing their swashbuckling routines. For further information on the International Academy of the Sword, contact Touché Unlimited. At Touché Unlimited, anything is possible!

# OREGON SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

In October I had the opportunity to see the closing night performances of **MacBeth** and **A Midsummer Night's Dream** at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland, Oregon. Both outdoor productions were choreographed by Roger A. Barnett, a member of the acting company.

The production of **MacBeth** was costumed almost entirely in black, with splashes of white and red used symbolically. Combatants fought with rapiers and simple cross hilt daggers that offered very little hand protection. The first battle scene started with the combatants walking on stage and assuming various guards. The ensuing fights were staged in slow motion, although the effect was marred by the varying speeds of the individual groups. The killing of Banquo consisted of a simple, bloodless cutting of the throat full on to the audience. Fleance's escape was justified by his captor's astonishment at the killing of Banquo. While this was justifiable stage action, it was not exciting --something one hopes for always, but especially in **MacBeth**. The final battle scene had MacBeth donning a breastplate with no apparent thought as to how this would affect fighting styles. Does this increase MacBeth's bravado, having his vital organs covered with armor? How might this change MacDuff's strategy who is similarly armed, but less protected? The resulting fight was sloppy, with cuts being either too high or too low much of the time--giving the fight an Errol Flynn style not helped by the choreography. The fight ends with MacDuff chasing MacBeth off stage to reappear with MacBeth's severed head.

There was one spectacular stunt in the show that involved Lady MacBeth in the sleepwalking scene. When climbing the stairs, Lady MacBeth stops, turns out to the audience, and saying "Give me your hands," reaches for her imaginary MacBeth. The result was a six-foot free-fall into the arms of her waiting attendants. The stunt was pulled off by the full commitment of the actress playing Lady MacBeth and the reactions of the other actors. Needless to say, a very audible gasp was heard from the audience.

**A Midsummer Night's Dream** fared slightly better. The show started with a ritualistic fencing bout involving three pairs of actors. As the ritual proceeded, one combatant slowly sped up until that bout became "real" competition. After victory, the combatant was then revealed to be Hippolyta. Sabres were used for this action, although the target areas and the parries used were more of the "single rapier" variety.

The entrance of Titania and Oberon was a choreographed dance that ended with Titania slapping Oberon. This was a full contact slap straight out to the audience. Even in my third row seat (and Ashland's Elizabethan theatre seats a thousand) the effect was lost.

The combat possibilities of the lovers' confrontation scene was given short shrift, although at one point Hermia does grab Lysander's sword and give it a few swings. These moves actually worked the best because the simpleness of them allowed the actors to commit fully to the moves.

Overall I was very disappointed, both with the fights and the festival's attitude towards fight choreography. Ashland is a major repertory company that not only employs upwards of fifty actors (about one-third are Equity), and generates over three hundred thousand audience members a year, but has previously employed professional fight choreographers David Boushey and Christopher Villa. Unfortunately, in the last few years, Ashland has increasingly relied upon actors with small amounts of



combat training to choreograph their shows. Not only do their audiences deserve better, but just as importantly, Ashland's actors deserve the safety and training that a professional fight choreographer can provide.

Dexter Fidler

## CORIOLANUS AT THE McCARTER THEATRE

Liviu Ciulei's production of *Coriolanus* at the McCarter Theatre in Princeton, November 4th through the 22nd was a visually stunning production. The mass battles in the first act and the assassination of Coriolanus, choreographed by David Leong, lived up to the keen picturization of the production.

The cold grey set consisted of a rock wall pierced on three levels by nine symmetrically placed Roman style arches. In front of the wall was a black sculptural unit which resembled a monumental portal. In the opening scene the rabble tears the monument apart in a powerful beginning to this strongly socio-political play. Movement occurred around, over and under the sculptural unit as it was disassembled during the rioting scene.

During the course of the play the sculptural unit, with its four leg units and tongue, became the benches of the senate, the cannons before Aufidius' stronghold, a tent like structure, an oriental style gate or an overpowering object/image hovering over the action on stage below. This, accompanied by visually strong white light, enhanced Liviu Ciulei's "living sculptures" in this cold, grey anti-democratic epic.

The mass battles consisted of three assaults on Aufidius' stronghold. The first battle begins with huge cannons pointing out over the audience in defense of the stronghold. The Romans cautiously emerge from the pit in the apron with their pilums and shields (scrutums) in guarded preparation before springing into attack. After dismantling the cannon and just as the Romans reached the wall, a startling piece of staging occurred when all the doors of the

stronghold opened simultaneously, revealing Aufidius and his men prepared to do battle.

David Leong, assisted by Payson Burt, staged some of the most focused, acrobatic, and historically accurate battle maneuvers seen in live theatre. Small "stories" about the battle were told throughout the action and the movement and stage pictures brought the audience's eye to those moments that told and reinforced the total story.

The Romans assaulted the fortress by attempting to scale the walls with ladders which were repulsed by the Volscians sending Roman soldiers flying to the ground. The Romans were forced to retreat to the trenches and, after cursing his men for their cowardice, Coriolanus led the second attack with the Romans forming a Greek phalanx and going shield to shield and then pilum to shield with the enemy. Coriolanus managed to drive a wedge through the Volscian defenses, breaking up their formation and sending them back into the fortress while fighting off three Volscians in gladiator style combat. The infantry men who had approached the fortress made a "tortoise" formation with their shields to protect themselves from the missiles being hurled from above and Coriolanus climaxed the second assault by marching up the shields of his men and into the second level of the fortress as the gates closed in on him. In the third attack the Romans wiped out the Volscians, entered the city and began sacking it.

The movement, acrobatics and the savagery of the three battles involving thirty five actor/combatants were riveting in their complexity and precision timing. There was some slight confusion at first in differentiating the armies as they prepared to do battle due to the similarity in their German style helmets and the muted khaki or grey costumes which were non-descript as to period or culture. The shields of the Volscians were round in contrast to the Roman scrutum which helped to distinguish between the armies in the opening moments of the battle.

The confrontation between Coriolanus and Aufidius began with the opponents diagonally across from each other.. A long pause to establish the ritual/preparation of combat occurred which, because of lack of specific stage business, caused the bottom to drop out of this scene. The fight between the two warriors was well executed and kept within the specific dictates of Liviu Ciulei that there be little or no blade contact. Leong had the two leaders test each other by using a great deal of shield to shield work and sword to shield work. While technically sufficient it did not live up to the spectacle of the battle scenes which had just preceded it.

The next and final image of violence in the play did not occur until the fifth act when Coriolanus was assassinated and his body raised on the pilums of the soldiers, a devastating moment as he seems to momentarily hang there with the polearms piercing his body. The final picture of this coldly passionate production was the body of Coriolanus lying alone on the bare stage at the conclusion of the performance.

This production had some of the best battle scenes seen on stage in recent years and David Leong (assisted by Payson Burt) is to be congratulated for his concept and its execution in this ultra modern production of this classic epic.

Linda McCollum

### TRINITY REP

During early December I had the pleasure of attending Trinity Rep's production of August Wilson's play, **Ma Rainey's Black Bottom**, directed by William Partlan. Gilbert McCauley staged two short but highly effective scenes of violence that added greatly to the high quality of the production. While hardly considered a fight show, hats off to the director for seeing the need to bring in an expert to stage what is a very climactic scene of violence in both acts. So very often directors do not see a need to make use of a fight director for a scene as small and "easy" as the ones contained in **Ma Rainey**...So very often we as audience members are disappointed and

left hungry for the climax of the production as a result of this sort of thinking.

During this same period of time while in Boston I saw a show at one of the major theatres in town directed by a well established director in the area. The climactic scene of the play involved an unarmed fight between two of the major characters and the results (obviously staged by the director, if staged at all) were entirely laughable. The bottom line is that you didn't care at all about who won or lost the confrontation. You were too busy cringing at the fact that punches were miles off target and knaps and masking nonexistent. This "easy" piece of combat brought the shows realism to a crashing halt and no one even cared as to the resolution.

Three cheers for the director of **Ma Rainey**... for hiring Gilbert to add to the realism of his production. Gilbert's work was safe, simple and very convincing; not too much for the actors to handle and just enough to serve the scene. I was completely taken in by the action and it drove the climax of Act I to a crescendo that demanded the audience's attention. The murder in Act II was a complete surprise and caught us all off guard, making the results all the more poignant as the play closed. It would serve us all well to urge any directors we know to hire an expert in all cases containing action and violence. The resulting rise in production values can only make for better theatre in this country. Again, a hearty well done to Gilbert McCauley.

Drew Fracher

### SCARAMOUCHE

The world premiere of the well known Sabatini novel and screen play **Scaramouche** was presented for the first time on stage at the Empty Space Theatre in Seattle. It was adapted for the stage by James Monitor, Robert Wright and Rex McDowell. It was a formidable effort and all their parts and many good moments prevailed in this adaptation. What was without a doubt the most frustrating aspect of the production was

its length--three and a half hours! One knew what was to come at the end of this marathon--a great duel! So I, like most of the others present on this final preview night waited with baited breath to see the villain get his "come uppence." And our wait was worth it! Allen Suddeth had done some lovely courtsword choreography. The point work was very fine and the actors who were somewhat inexperienced (especially in courtsword) did an admirable job. The build to the final duel was set up by various small exchanges earlier, including a nice piece of work by James Monitor (a member of the Society) and co-author of the adapted piece. He and Charlie Robinson (Scaramouche) set up the final duel with a piece of choreography that was sure to make the audience wonder what would come of this final confrontation which had to be. A bit of cape work was thrown in, a bit of chair work was thrown in along with some excellent point work by Allen.

Kerry Skalsy (Society member) did an excellent job both in dueling and acting. It is always obvious when you see Society members performing fights on stage because they come off looking very good.

There were only two scary moments. One was when the actors got too close to the audience and the other was when the magic chair didn't break properly. Allen was a bit nervous as the actor was about to use a semi-lethal part of the chair to accompany his courtsword work, but the actor finally managed to deal with the predicament before anyone could get hurt.

The play was a bit dull at times, but the fights or the anticipation of the fights kept a certain edge on the evenings proceedings. I think with some substantial cuts, this adaptation could be a winner. Like a typical fight choreographer, I don't feel any of the fight situations need altering. Perhaps the play is a little too ambitious and a little too wordy. By and large, it was a nice evening at the theatre.

David Boushey

## THE THREE MUSKETEERS

The **Seattle Times** in their review of Seattle Children's Theatre production of the **The Three Musketeers** raved about the dazzling swordplay by David Boushey, one of the world's top fight choreographers. The reviewer was amazed at how David managed to stage four hair-raising sword and dagger fights simultaneously on the cozy stage of the Poncho Theater. The fights alone were well worth the price of admission.

## TRUE WEST

West Virginia University's production of **True West** was clean and innovative with an outstanding lead performance by Jim McCrum playing Lee. Ben Link played Austin and did an admirable job of keeping up with McCrum, but the level of experience between the two actors was very apparent.

Susan Vagedes, the fight choreographer and assistant professor at West Virginia University, was given carte blanche with the ending fight which could have been dangerous having a "do anything you like" fight, but the final result did not detract or interrupt the flow of the play. The fight included the strangling scene with a telephone cord, ending with both men out of breath and scrambling on the floor like animals as the lights went down.

The strangling sequence was the most effective part of the fight, from the wrap of the cord, struggling through and destroying the kitchen with Austin on Lee's back, and ending downstage center with Austin riding Lee like a horse controlling and strangling him with his "reins." A few times the two actors would get too far apart to make the illusion of the strangle work, but the tension on the telephone cord was steady and safe.

By far the most impressive technique of the night, and one I particularly enjoyed was Austin heaving his brother up to his knees by using what appeared to be the telephone cord

wrapped around his neck. Because I was looking for the technique, I saw Austin reach down, grab a handful of the back of Lee's shirt, plant his feet under his own and lift, using the shirt. But the audience truly believed that Lee was hanging by his neck. The "ah's" when Lee dropped his hands from around the cord and let them hang limply at his sides were clearly audible. By the time Lee dropped his hands, the audience had already forgotten about seeing Austin's hand at the back of Lee's shirt, if they even saw it at all.

After thinking Lee is dead we are surprised when he comes to life and starts fighting with his brother again. This sequence takes the two actors through the entire house, destroying everything in their path with assorted body slams, falls, and rolls over the furniture. All sharp and/or breakable objects were kept away from any fighting area.

This part of the fight, however, was much more conservative with good clean stage combat techniques being well set up and executed precisely. Two problems I had in this second section were the vagueness of the wrestling on the floor and changes of advantages making transitions unclear and the second was the stiffness of Ben Link's falls. Considering the quality of the rest of the fight, these two things stick out like a sore thumb. The problem with the falls was not his doing them incorrectly, for he clearly knew what he was doing. But every fall lacked the abandon someone out of control displays.

Congratulations to Susan for a successful fight in her first year as both a professor of movement/stage combat at West Virginia University Theatre Department and as a Certified Teacher in the Society.

**Payson H. Burt**

### **THE RIVALS at Berkeley Rep**

This wonderful comedy of word-play and mistaken lovers quite naturally culminates in a sword fight between the professional pirate, Sir Lucius O'Trigger, and the thwarted lover, Captain Jack Absolute. The play is a comedy and the

intention of this engaging comedy was that the fight would be one as well.

Was the fight ever disappointing! Directed by Michael Cawelti, it was short, without dynamics, and unclear. The actors went much too fast, were in distance and without focus. To do a good comedic fight a combatant must first have very good technique, and these fighters were definitely without training. Choreographically there were some off-target lunges, high-low's where you don't know who is attacking whom and gratuitous cutting of bushes. (This was without an evasion. The actors merely walked away from one another during the fight to cut shrubs).

The fight, which should have been the highlight of the show, actually put off the audience. The audience had actually grown to care about the characters and the production didn't care about the fight.

**Richard Lane**

### **THE HAIRY APE at Berkeley Rep**

**The Hairy Ape** is a play about class distinctions or about the beast that lives within us all. From a director's standpoint the approach could be one of stylization or harsh reality. In this production an attempt at stylization of movement was made. The upper class mimicked birds and the workers made ape-like movements.

These choices could have been every effective. The opening scene in the stoker of a steamship afforded an opportunity for some very violent combat in harsh lighting to a percussive sound score by Max Roach. Unfortunately, this same lighting made it very difficult to see unless one sat in the front row. Additionally, the actors seemed very hesitant about the combat (fight direction by Michael Cawelti) and any reality to the fight was lost in the anticipation of punches. Very few rolls were used (one of the actors said that the Fight Director was unable to teach them) and consequently the fight seemed to be on one level and was very repetitive.

The show was staged with the audience on risers on two sides of the stage. Knaps were almost always visible; this could have been avoided by timing the fight out to the percussive sound score. This would have also anchored the actors to a rhythm rather than having them fall back on their obvious lack of training.

The sloppy combat in the opening was never redeemed by any of the combat to come. Roundhouse punches to the head with an evasion or removal were uniformly so high as to be completely non-believable indicating a lack of trust between the actors or a fear of hurting each other. Punches and kicks and their reactions made it difficult to understand the points of contact in the fight. In the scene outside the Union Hall there was a crotch punch that was so obviously a punch to the thigh.

All in all, this show was very disappointing. In a meeting with the director George Ferencz before casting, he said how much he was looking forward to the full contact violence in his vision of *The Hairy Ape*. They missed.

**Richard Lane and Dexter Fidler**

#### **PURLOINED POE at the Lifeline**

Christina Calvit's *Purloined Poe* at the Lifeline Theatre culminated in an extraordinary courtsword and cape duel on a four foot wide U-shaped platform eight feet high. David Woolley's fight incorporated a feeling of risk and danger in this dark scene with its combatants leaping from one platform to another in this daring duel between Edgar Allan Poe and his alter ego William Wilson.

The fact that Woolley chose to use capes in this confined space was a surprise in itself and the fact that the cape work was so well executed was even a bigger surprise. Woolley used the limitations of the confines of the space to advantage. There were no long drawn out point work sequences. Direct attacks were made, responded to and maneuvered for next advantage or attack

which lent itself to a believable degree of realism in this well masked fight. The kill was on the down left platform and one saw and heard the sword thrust into the flesh. Blood flowed as Poe pommeled his opponent to death in a vicious final attack.

Besides the duel at the end of the play there were several well executed falls from ladders and two attempted strangulations. Considering that the two seemingly confident and assured actor combatants had never held a sword in their hands until three weeks before the opening, this was an amazingly well conceived and executed fight. David Woolley is obviously a hot property for stage combat in the Chicago area and one to keep an eye on.

**Linda McCollum**

#### **RICHARD III at the Guthrie**

Upstage of the proscenium the set was a bare stage with everything exposed--suggestive of anything from a Hollywood sound stage, a cold castle or a prison. The thrust was covered with wire grating with some sections opening into pits below. The wire grates allowed light to shine up from below the actors distorting their features and casting huge shadows on the walls which were reminiscent of Eisenstein's *Ivan the Terrible*. Byron Jennings' Richard was the quintessential paradox with some unusual colorings to lines in this well known history play. Garland Wright's cinematically styled direction, underscored by music, revealed more about this play and its numerous characters than one normally encounters.

David Leong's fights in the final act were brutal and in keeping with the whole concept of the production which had a huge column stage right that oozed blood every time someone was murdered. Most of the battle occurred on the thrust with the ghosts of Richard's numerous victims scattered about the battlefield. David used unusual pairings of weapons in the battle at Bosworth Field which lent a great deal of variety to the mass battles and made them convincing. Edges of shields were used as offensive weapons,

objects were flung at the enemy, murders occurred in direct view of the audience with nothing masked and were done so well that one would swear they heard the impact of the blade as they saw it penetrate.

Specially designed armor by Christopher Poor of Arms and Armour in Minneapolis was used for Richard and Richmond which permitted direct blows to the body. Richard fought with a mace which he flung madly about, and the armour on his left arm had hook like protrusions which made this yet another weapon. Richmond fought with sword and dagger.

What was so amazing about the Richard/Richmond fight was the convincingly real conflict as the two fought to the death to be king. It never looked choreographed with precisely timed attacks and parries. Instead there

was a physically grotesque element as the two combatants struggled with each other. After a corps a corps, Richard kept Richmond in the clinch and dragged him awkwardly about the field trying to get the advantage. Vicious pommeling of the victim was seen in this fight as well as of some of the soldiers in the battlefield.

Richard was killed down center in full view of the audience just as Clarence had been earlier in the play as well as a soldier during the battle who was physically lifted off the floor with a sword blade at his throat.

The final image of this brilliantly conceived and directed play was Richmond exiting up center with his enormous blood stained cape dragging over the bodies on the smoke filled battlefield. as the column oozed blood.

**Linda McCollum**



David Leong's staging of the assassination of Coriolanus in Liviu Ciulei's production at the McCarter Theatre, November 1987.

Many thanks for sending me the copy of your magazine **The Fight Master**.... congratulations on an excellent publication to all concerned and my best wishes for continued success.

Yours sincerely,  
**William Hobbs**

### Reviewing the Reviewer

It is always interesting to hear other perspectives of your work especially when it is a Society member who you know has a base of knowledge to support his observations. In some ways Tony Soper was right on with various comments in his review of **The Three Musketeers** and in some ways he was a bit presumptuous.

The major problem was an age old problem in choreographing the twenty-five separate fights in **The Three Musketeers** for the Seattle Children's Theatre. The director made a point of casting four good to excellent actors and swordsmen to play the roles of the musketeers and not one experienced swordsman to play the Cardinal's Guards! The Cardinal's Guards were without any prior experience. I mean ZIP! The fact that I managed to get the fights out of them should have earned me a TONY! But as we all know, we cannot always assume that a director will cast semi-experienced or better yet experienced swordsmen in a given show even if it is **The Three Musketeers**. You as the fight director are expected to wave your magic wand and the actors instantly become world class swordsmen.

I take exception to some of the comments made in Mr. Soper's review. First, the staging area was indeed small and things were indeed tight but they were not unsafe. Once the show opened, there was not one injury among the actors

due to the fights. Of course spatial distances were close but if one were to observe the fights from the "wings" he would have seen that the combatants were out of reach. If some "drifted" in the fights, that was due to their lack of following my very specific requests on safety and distance. Anyone who knows me knows I am fanatical about fencing measure but unfortunately I cannot do the fights for the actors nor can I be there at every performance to keep them in line.

Because we are answerable to the director, the development of the action was what the directors wanted. We can suggest various possibilities, but if the director wants the action erupting from out of no where, that is what I as a fight director must give him. And in many ways, the style in which the play was written dictated instantaneous action.

After fifteen years of choreographing fights I know how to draw focus but there are times when you do not want to draw focus, i.e. when your combatants look so weak you feel it will be a distraction if given focus. I deliberately at times pulled focus and relied on the impact of the total mayhem to carry the fights (again because of weak cardinal's guards). I hope some of the younger choreographers in the Society take note that it is sometimes prudent to draw focus from your combatants. When in the case of Constance fighting one of the guards in place of Aremis then obviously you must give her focus as I did.

I am not being defensive about my choreography. It is a matter of one person making assumptions about my work that are not totally correct. I expect members of the Society to know certain aspects of the fight game that regular reviewers don't know.

Now as far as the move "stolen" from **Conan**. In the first place I don't use **Conan** to inspire my choreographic skills. In the second place, the move was described incorrectly. Let me describe it so that if any of my colleagues want to "steal" it from me they may do so with my blessings. It begins with a thrust by Rochfort to the left breast of

D'Artagnan He parries "high" prime, then steps in with a passing movement with his left foot while wrapping his left arm in a serpentine fashion around Rochfort's blade grasping the hilt so he cannot cut the arm or retreat with his sword. Once he is "hung up" with this trapping move, D'Artagnan can then cut across the attacker forcing him to jump back without his sword or he can "stick" him which is what I did to Rochfort. Now D'Artagnan has Rochfort's sword in his left hand and his own sword still in his right hand. The point of Rochfort's sword is protruding behind him (from the disarm). D'Artagnan turns around to talk to Porthos. The wounded Rochfort draws a dagger from his boot (sneaky devil) and re-attacks at the back of D'Artagnan and D'Artagnan thrusts Rochfort's entrapped weapon straight back and into the chest of Rochfort. One might see a little poetic justice in this action. So, there is no transfer of the weapon from the right to the left hand. I stole this move some fifteen years ago from my mentor who stole it from his. We have been thieves for centuries Tony! There are only so many moves one can come up with and it is the way which you couple those moves together that makes for interesting fight choreography Tony often has many interesting and valid comments to make regarding the various shows he reviews but I do feel that sometimes a review of a reviewer is necessary and informative.

**David Boushey**



## CERTIFICATIONS

### Renaissance Pleasure Faire

On August 14th I travelled up to northern New York to the woods near Syracuse to adjudicate the students of Dale A Girard at the Pleasure Faire of the Renaissance. On an outdoor stage, under shady trees, and with a cool wind blowing, I saw some mighty good work. Seventeen combatants took the test, many with creative scenes: to wit, A Dr. Ruth sketch with sperms struggling to be "first," a Musketeer and his younger brother, and the Snake and Eve. More important, however, was a very solid base in technique. Though there were some failures, overall Dale's students' work is very good. The best fight of the day should go to Chris Walz and Michael Maag, who were recommended in rapier/dagger, unarmed and quarterstaff, in a scene about a younger brother's ambition to become a musketeer.

Paul Kiernon	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
Kevin Hackett	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Quarterstaff <b>Recommended</b> Unarmed
Tamara Lewis	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword
Steve Mallinson	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Broadsword
Leslie Buxbaum	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed

Casey Cooper	Quarterstaff <b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed
Rob Kahn	Quarterstaff <b>Recommended</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed <b>Passed</b> Quarterstaff
Peter Suarez	<b>Recommended</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed <b>Passed</b> Quarterstaff
Michael Oarth	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
Chris Walz	<b>Recommended</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
Michael Maag	<b>Recommended</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
Jeff Hicks	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff
John St. Angelo	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger Unarmed Quarterstaff

Instructor: Dale A. Girard  
Adjudicator: J. Allen Suddeth

### VIKING at PARK RAPIDS

On August 27th I adjudicated several combatants at the outdoor drama **Viking** in Park Rapids, Minnesota. The students were under the guidance of

Twelve students took the test and eleven managed to pass. Overall, I was very pleased with the progress these students showed as I had witnessed their work in the beginning stages and was pleasantly surprised to find a significant improvement in their work. I feel much of the credit should go to Mr. Coyl who displayed much poise and skill as a

teacher. My favorite scenario was Clint Eastwood and Sylvester Stallone who meet at an audition for **Hamlet** and commence to brush up on their skills with the various weapons at hand. Of course, several one liners were part and parcel of the scene--"Make my day" and "You're the disease and I am the cure" to name a couple.

This was the second adjudication at **Viking** and both have been quite successful. It is good to see so many outdoor dramas conducting combat classes and certification tests. I hope this is a permanent trend.

The following people passed the

James Kline  
Bob Wicklund  
Helen Mutsch  
Valary Ann Smith  
Patrick Williamson  
Kevin Coltrane  
Bob Sylskar  
Martin Seal  
Kent Hoffman  
Dexter Ramey  
Vincent Barrett

**Instructor: Chuck Coyl**  
**Adjudicator: David Boushey**

## PENNSYLVANIA

On Thursday, October 8th, 1987, I had the great pleasure of adjudicating an SAFD Certification Test at the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire. The twenty-seven participants all passed as Actor/Combatants, with four recommendations in broadsword and unarmed combat. The overall standard was very high. Fight Director David Leong, his Fight Captain Doug Mumaw, and Fight Lieutenants Jamie Cheatham and Michael Donahue are to be congratulated on this happy result. The playlets on which the combatants hung their test routines were highly ingenious and extremely well acted. My favorite was a hilarious romp entitled "Fawn and Ollie: The True Story." Particularly outstanding was the unarmed. Every move had a hundred percent realism, and

the safety factor was paramount without being intrusive. I was also much impressed with the way yield parries were handled with Broadsword--the cut to center head on a running attack parried in six for example. The test took place on the stage of a life-size replica of the old Globe Theatre of Shakespeare's day, flag flying atop. I felt proud for the students and their mentors.

David Watts	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger <b>Recommended</b> Unarmed Broadsword
Laura A. Vicari	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger <b>Recommended</b> Unarmed Broadsword
Scott Nice	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger <b>Recommended</b> Unarmed Broadsword
Justine Reiss	<b>Passed</b> Rapier/Dagger <b>Recommended</b> Unarmed Broadsword

The following passed the certification test with proficiency in rapier/dagger, unarmed and broadsword.

Kristen Adams  
Nesta Chapman  
Betsy Brody  
Andrea Shedwick  
Vivian Sorenson  
Donna L. Bouchard  
Ellen Jane Abrams  
Todd Fleming  
Chris Hildebrandt  
David Klionsky  
Rhonda Knola  
Mark Priest  
Allen Kretschmer  
Susan Shimer  
Christopher Adams  
Valerie Lippincott

Deena Gray  
Michele Foor  
Ted Schaeffer  
Kitty Jones  
Stephen Welsh  
David Donovan  
Gwenne Weber

**Instructor:** David Leong  
**Assisted by:** Doug Mumaw, Jamie  
**Adjudicator:** Patrick Crean

### TOUCHÉ UNLIMITED

On November 7th I adjudicated the first fight test at Touche Unlimited. The adjudication took place in San Francisco with a large gathering of enthusiastic spectators. Over-all, the fights were well conceived and it became very apparent that their instructor J. R. Beardsley had kept a tight grip on the class structure and on the various techniques that had been honed. I found it especially in the swordplay and more so with the ladies who took their male counterparts to task in the quick dexterous courtsword work. The unarmed work was a little weak in spots and thus I was unable to give any recommendations. I did pass six out of the eight combatants.

It appears as though Touche Unlimited is gearing up for some big successes in the not too distant future. If this adjudication was any kind of a beacon light for things to come I suspect we will be hearing a lot more about the Bay Area swashbucklers from Touche Unlimited.

Those passing the certification test are as follows:

Tina Hansen  
Alf Adams  
John Hilinski  
Melanie Diamond  
Michael Levinson  
James Hayes

**Instructor:** J.R. Beardsley  
**Adjudicator:** David Boushey

### CAL ARTS

On December 11th I was invited to Valencia, California to adjudicate the students at the California Institute of the Arts. As has been my experience for the past two years, Erik Fredricksen had choreographed some very effective fight routines. It was obvious again that he had put forth a great deal of effort to prepare his students for their certification and again it was quite obvious who had worked hard and who tried to slide by. I find Cal Arts frustrating at times because I get the impression that many of the students are willing to do just enough to pass certification. At this testing, no one received a recommendation nor did any come close. Several passed the test which speaks well of their efforts but the students at hand simply weren't willing to "go for the gold." They were quite content to "get by" and that is what frustrates me about Cal Arts. The potential is there and the students simply are not willing to really go for it. I am sure this must frustrate Erik, as we all know him to be a consummate professional. What was lacking in these fights was intensity! The students were not willing to raise the "stakes." They were content to get by. Overall the technique was fairly good, but the illusion of danger was not there. I feel perhaps too much Tai Chi is presented in the movement program as most of the students appear to be 1960's mellow rather than grounded and forceful. Fights have to be acted with a certain amount of intensity and if it is lacking, the fights go nowhere and everybody simply "gets by."

My congratulations to Erik for his imaginative choreography. Next time, if I am invited down to Cal Arts, I will be expecting much more tenacity!

The following students passed the

Kevin Free  
Kristie Sanders  
Aaron Alpern  
Peter Duchenes  
Donny Lee

Judy Goff  
Summer Rognlie  
Sean Doherty  
Craig Koller  
Jeff Gifford  
Tom Slotten  
Ferdinand Lewis  
Judith Hawking  
Melissa Lechner  
Luch Boryer

**Instructor: Erik Fredricksen**  
**Adjudicator: David Boushey**

### CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Paul B. Anderson Jr.  
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Stanley Haehl  
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Meadows School of the Arts  
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Robert Walsh  
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Georgetown, Kentucky

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Daytona Beach, Florida 32017

Justine Reiss  
2100 Rockwood Drive  
Sacramento, California 95608

Andrea K. Shedwick  
227 Port St.  
Ford City, PA 16226

David T. Watts  
43 Zurich Way  
Tell City, Indiana 47506

Stephen Welsh  
694 Anderson  
Memphis, TN 38104

**Eric Booth** staged the fights in **Hamlet** in a workshop production for the Nashville Institute for the Arts (he played the title role), and led an unarmed combat workshop at Smith College.

**David Boushey** will choreograph **Hamlet** for the University of South Carolina where he will be teaching a master class. His feature film **Promised Land** premieres in January at the American Film Festival where he will be joining other members of the United Stuntmen's Association in conducting a seminar on stunts and special effects. The made for television film in which he was principle stuntman will air in mid January and is entitled **A Stranger on My Land**.

**Payson Burt** assisted **David Leong** on **Coriolanus** at the McCarter Theatre while choreographing **Rashomon** at Drexel University in Philadelphia. He will be doing **Peter Pan** at Drexel University in the Spring.

**Dan Carter** is teaching stage combat at Florida State University and is assisted by MFA directing candidate **Thomas Cavano**.

**Bill Ferrell** appeared in the New York Renaissance Festival and doubled "Frankie" for a fall on **One Life to Live**. Bill also had a running role as officer Rick Kovacs on **Another World** last Spring and appeared as the Phantom on **One Life to Live**.

**James Finney** choreographed the fights for **Scheherezade** at the Riverside Theatre and directed **Pirates of Penzance** in Iowa last fall as well as having taught three workshops around the state. He is doing the fights for

**Zastrozzi** at the Round House in Silver Spring, Maryland, **Corpse at Circa 21** in Illinois and **Romeo and Juliet** at the University of Iowa in January.

**George Fosgate** spent his leave from the University of Minnesota, Morris in San Francisco where he did a lot of acting and a little assistant directing. He was assistant director on the Magic Theatre's revival of **Buried Child**, acted at several small professional theatres including One Act Theatre Company and the Berkeley Jewish Theatre. He worked on Lucasfilms production of **Howard the Duck**. He is back in Minnesota and will be doing Lorca's **Blood Wedding** in February.

**Drew Fracher** has most recently finished a guest artist stint teaching swordplay at Brandeis University in Boston. While there he staged a small sword duel for their current production of **The Rivals**. Before that he joined Society members **Mark Guinn**, **Jamie Cheatham** and **Doug Mumaw** in a five day run of **The Fools of Defense**, a comedic swordplay piece developed by David Leong for the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire. During October he staged fights for the University of Cincinnati's production of **Cymbeline**.

**David Leong's** fights can be seen currently in Garland Wright's production of **Richard III** at the Guthrie Theatre and in the pre Broadway tour of **Macbeth** starring Christopher Plummer and directed by Ken Frankel. The three month tour will cover Baltimore, Pittsburgh, Toronto, Boston and New Haven before opening April 21st at the St. James Theatre in New York. David is now in rehearsal for Michael Kahn's **Macbeth** at the Folger Theatre.

**Emily Conable Vaughn** has been teaching stage combat along with her husband Steve at SUNY Geneseo, University of Rochester Summer Theatre while continuing their work with Allen Suddeth's **Fight R Us** and **Murder to Go**.

**David Woolley** choreographed **Troilus and Cressida** at the Ruth Page Theatre in Chicago and a courtsword and cloak duel for a new play, **Purloined Poe** at the Lifeline Theatre. David continues to teach classes in stage combat at Columbia College. David also staged fights for the film, **An American Murder**.

---

**Dennis L. Graves**

*-Swordcutler-*

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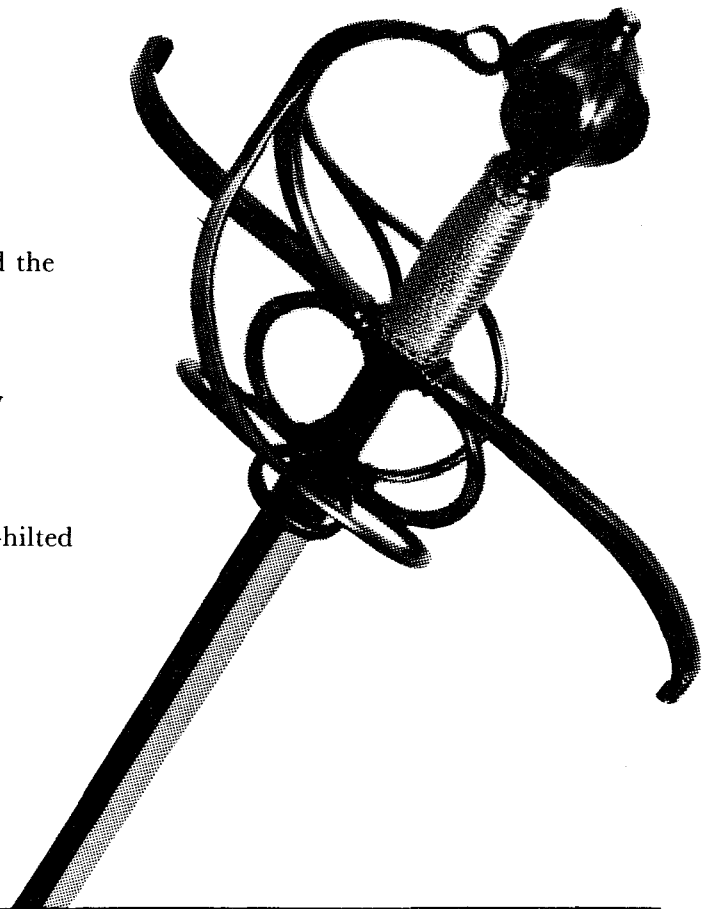
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