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The Society of American Fight Directors

Spring 1988

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The Society of American Fight Directors

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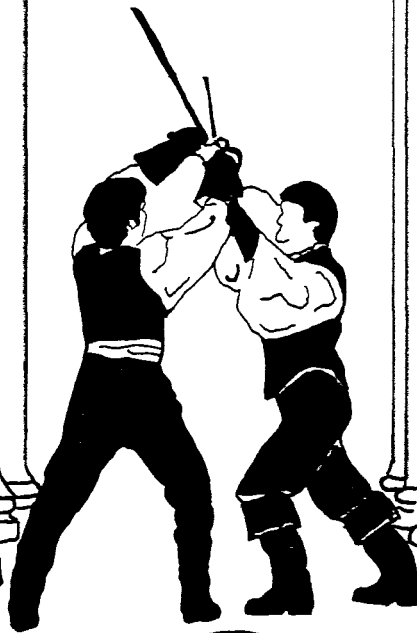
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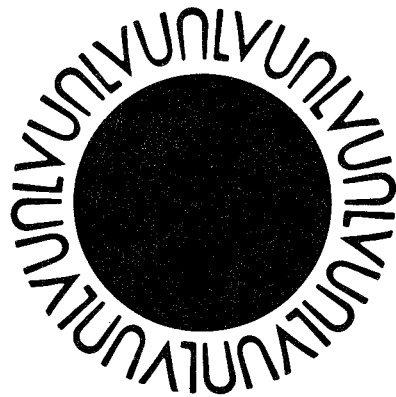
SOCIETY OF
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The Fight MASTER

JOURNAL OF THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

SPRING 1988
VOLUME XI number 2

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SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

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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.

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EDITOR'S COMMENTS

In the middle of April, Joseph Martinez and I met with Society members and other fight choreographers in the New York area. The meeting proved to be very productive and cleared up some misconceptions about the goals and objectives of the Society. It was also good to see some familiar faces and to meet some of our members who have only been a name on a roster for me. Joseph plans to have regional meetings annually which should prove helpful in keeping the lines of communication open and in realizing the varying needs from region to region.

In this issue we have several articles written by fight choreographers that deal with the behind the scenes problems and approaches to staging fights. David Leong shares his Broadway experience, Charles Conwell gives us an unusual fight concept for **Hamlet**, and Richard Gradkowski gives us an objective look at **Rashomon**. Lloyd Caldwell shares some historical information on a much neglected area of dramatic literature and one that offers exciting opportunities for the fight choreographer. Gregg Henry shares a bibliography of some hard to find books that are on microfilm at his library and Rod Casteel talks about what to look for when choosing a stage combat weapon.

Articles, letters, reviews, and information for the Society News section may be submitted at anytime. Those wishing to submit articles for consideration in the September issue should have them to me by August 1st.

I wish to thank Gregg Hillmar and Todd Tjaden for their help in putting this issue together. As you will see we are making some gradual changes in the format that will make it easier to put the journal together in the future.

Linda Carlyle McCollum



PRESIDENT'S REPORT

As many of you now know, we have had our non profit status clarified and have been granted our Federal Not-For-Profit Tax Exempt Status. We have the dedication of past presidents David Boushey and Erik Fredrickson to thank for this important recognition. We are now eligible for national and local public funds, and we are now more attractive to private donors as well. At the beginning of our second decade as the premiere organization promoting the Combat Arts in the United States, the officers and I will be seeking grants and public donations to help us in our efforts to create a more visible presence in the entertainment industry and among the public at large.

The creative work that you do is without a doubt of the finest quality and extremely important in a practical sense. However, it is expensive to advertise our services on a national level. The Society of American Fight Directors needs your help in seeking additional sources of revenue to enhance our national image and to spread the word about our good work. I have always maintained that the need for our services is enormous! Unfortunately, many theatre practitioners, professional and amateur, remain ignorant of the potential we possess to enhance their work aesthetically and practically.

Therefore, I call upon the membership to send to me any information that you may have about potential grants or private donors. I want specifics as well as general ideas about funding sources for the Society. If you seek a grant on a local or state level, you might be able to use the Society as an umbrella organization. This is possible, if your proposal is reviewed and approved by the Officers. The possibilities are limitless.

Even with our very limited resources, we are doing what we can to promote the Society of American Fight Directors. You should be receiving our latest brochure introducing the goals and services offered by the Society. I am very



TREASURER'S REPORT

pleased with the brochure. It is attractive and provocative. The brochure is largely a product of the efforts of our Vice President, Drew Fracher, and Society member Duane Orleman. Duane donated the services of his graphics company in Cincinnati, OMNIGRAPHICS. We all benefit from their energy and commitment. We will be sending the brochures out to all of the professional, community and academic theatres in the country. We will also send copies to training institutions, arts agents, arts agencies and councils, and arts foundations. If there is a pertinent individual or group that you believe should have a brochure, please write to Linda McCollum, our secretary, with the information.

We want to do much more. And much more will happen in the way of national recognition, if the membership will pool their energies and begin to support the Officers. Need I say that I am looking forward to your replies?

I have begun the process of establishing regional representatives of the Society of American Fight Directors. The regions will be somewhat loose and correspond to the principal geographic regions of the United States (Northeast, Southeast, Midwest, West, Southwest, Southern Pacific and Northern Pacific).

At the recent annual meeting of the Society in New York City, I asked Allen Suddeth to be the Northeastern Regional Representative. At the Chicago meeting I asked David Woolley to be the Midwest Representative. I will be the southeastern representative. I am now seeking representatives for the other regions.

If you are a Certified Teacher or an Associate member with a desire to actively promote the stage combat arts in your region (creating a monthly newsletter, giving talks about the Society in schools, clubs, providing a local contact number for members, actors, producers, directors), then let me know of your interest. I would like to have the regional network in place by September of this year.

All my best wishes for a healthy and prosperous summer season.

Joseph Martinez

Thanks to all of you who paid your dues before the March 1st deadline. Welcome to another year of Society information and activities. If you did not get your dues paid or you want to join the Society for the first time, please contact Linda McCollum or myself for procedures.

Also, any of you who have students that you want to get certified, please contact me well in advance so we can get you on a fight master's calendar. See you all in Memphis.

James Finney

WORKSHOP REPORT

The enrollment for the National Stage Combat Workshop and the Teacher Training Program, July 18th through August 5th at Memphis State University, has reached its limit. With the late arrivals in the next few days the enrollment may surpass the previous high of forty six reached in 1984 at Northern Kentucky University and in 1986 at Memphis State University. Joseph Martinez has also moved his maximum enrollment up to fourteen. Ann Halligan and her assistant, Cliff Thompson have been quite efficient in processing the paperwork for the incoming participants.

This year we are fortunate to have seven assistants who have extensive experience in the area of teaching. Five are graduates of last year's first Teacher Training Program, one is from Joseph's first advanced workshop at the Irish Creek Farm and one is a returning assistant from last year. They are Mark Guinn, David Woolley, Ralph Anderson, Susan Vagedes, Michael Donahue, Geoffrey Alm and Dan Carter.

In case you need a reminder, the teaching staff has made significant changes in the weapon assignments for this year. Erik Fredrickson will be swinging the quarterstaff, Drew Fracher wielding the broadsword, David Boushey instructing unarmed combat, Allen Suddeth on rapier and dagger and yours truly on courtsword. Patrick Crean will not be in attendance this year due to a

schedule conflict with the Stratford Festival in Canada. It seems that Mr. Crean's multi-talented skills in the art of pointwork will be put to use as fight director for a revival of their highly successful production of **The Three Musketeers**. We will all miss Paddy at this year's workshop.

J.R. Beardsley of American Fencers Supply and Touché Unlimited and Rod Casteel of Colonial Armoury will be in attendance representing their respective companies.

As mentioned in past reports, this workshop has become a major source of training for teachers and actors. This year, even more than others, reflects the sizable impact the Society of American Fight Directors has had on the American Theatre scene. Pat yourselves on the back!

David Leong

Initial membership in the SAFD is \$25. Dues for Fight Masters, Certified Teachers, Recognized Actor/Combatants, Associates, Affiliates and Friends are \$25 annually. All membership dues are to be paid in January to the Secretary, Linda McCollum, P.O. Box 218, Blue Diamond, Nevada 89004

Inquires concerning new memberships, status or change of address should be addressed to the secretary, Linda McCollum, P.O. Box 218, Blue Diamond, Nevada 89004

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

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

FILM COORDINATOR

In my first article in the January issue of **The Fight Master** I urged members of the Society to approach the various film commissions in their states and align themselves with the people who coordinate the various duties in their charge such as licensing and location scouting. By keeping in touch with those people who are the first to know about films in your state you will stand a much better chance of securing the position of stunt coordinator on incoming film projects. There is one very important fact to keep in mind when dealing with the stunt aspects of a given film project. If you get to the producer/director/production coordinator too late in the game, a stunt coordinator will already be hired and you can rest assured that he is going to bring in all his own cronies. It's very simple---he knows that he is feathering his own bed for future work when he "cashes in his ticket," i.e., when the man he got the work for pays him back for the work he got him earlier on. It is quite irrelevant whether you are in the immediate area or not, or whether you are skilled. The coordinator will still bring in his own people and will always say he couldn't trust these local guys to get the job done. To assure a first rate product, he has to go with his own people. For the most part this is all B.S., but most producers will buy into it. Therefore, it behooves you to get the job as stunt coordinator and then you can do the hiring. Therefore, stay in touch with your state film people and get contact numbers or addresses of the producers or production managers as early as possible to thus start the wheels in motion. If the coordinator is already hired, you can get his number and approach him with your credentials. Sometimes you can get a day or two this way, but it will be very limited if you are lucky enough to work at all.

Now once you have been able to contact the P.M. you must be able to "sell" him. What you must have in your hip pocket is a list of legitimate utility stuntmen, i.e., stuntmen who basically do all aspects of the stunt business, and then you need your specialists: men and women who let's say specialize in high falls, or precision car driving or fire burns. You can't be a stunt coordinator and not have trained professionals at your beck and call.

Choreographing fights either unarmed or with weapons is just one aspect of the stunt business. The fact that you are a fight director is not enough. The following areas are part and parcel of the stunt business.

Fighting--unarmed and weapons (when I say weapons I mean all weapons which include pistols, machine guns, and martial arts weapons).

Fire burns--full and partial (knowledge of fire suits, gels).

High falls--twenty feet up to two hundred feet (knowledge of air bags).

Horse work--jumps, falls, riding (not bridal path!).

Motorcycles--jumps and crashes.

Automobiles--precision driving, jumps, rolls and crashes.

Aerial work--parachuting, hang gliding, scaffling.

Underwater--scuba.

Mountain work--climbing, rapelling.

Skiing--snow and water. Jumps and tricks.

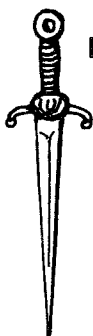
Planes, helicopters and boats (complete specialists).

It is important that you have people that can help you in all these areas. You obviously cannot be an expert in all areas, but you must have a working knowledge of the various areas so you can talk the language with the director when he asks you to specify how you intend to pull off a particular stunt. If you cannot give the impression you know what you are doing then you are dead in the water. This is why you need specialists around you and at least one "old pro." The old pro I work with is Bob Miles who was the stunt coordinator for **Bonanza, Wild, Wild, West** and **Little House on the Prairie** and the list goes on. In the next article I will talk about securing someone who knows the ropes and knows how to speak film language.

But first and foremost, make your contacts! Start the wheels in motion. Get to know the film people in your area of the country and keep in contact with them at least once a month! There is so much to learn in the stunt business, as I am finding out and it is no easy task; but it can be done and with sensibility and professionalism we can begin

to pursue this area of the entertainment industry thus bringing the Society into the foreground of a relatively untouched area of endeavor.

David Boushey
(206) 522-7001



PARRYING DAGGERS AND PONIARDS

by DR. LEONID TARASSUK

Senior Research Associate
Dept. of Arms & Armor
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Consulting Curator
Harding Collection of Arms & Armor
Art Institute of Chicago

The Society of American Fight Directors has published this comprehensive and profusely illustrated monograph, an expansion of the series of three articles previously published in the Fightmaster. This monograph gives a complete history of the development and nomenclature of these weapons, as well as illustrating their wearing and use in attack and defense.

Published at a retail price of \$16.95, we are offering this monograph to members only, at a special price of \$10.00. Every SAFD member should have this valuable reference work in their library. Send check or M.O. for \$10.00 (made out to the SAFD) to:

Linda McCollum
SAFD
P.O. Box 218
Blue Diamond, NV
89004

STAGE COMBAT IN THE SPANISH GOLDEN AGE

by Lloyd Caldwell

Dangle the opportunity to choreograph **Romeo and Juliet** before a young fight director and he or she would jump at the chance. Offer the chance to choreograph **Mornings in April and May** and the same director would say "Huh?" The drama of the Spanish Golden Age doesn't receive much attention in this country beyond the occasional production of **Life Is A Dream**. This is in part due to the rather poor translations available in English. Written in verse, these plays suffer the same violence that Shakespeare does when translated out of their native language. Further, these plays have had a very limited commercial appeal, as they have only recently been "resurrected" in their own land. For the majority of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries these plays were slighted first by neo-classicists and then by Fascist critics under Franco as ill-constructed or "dated" pieces. The same criticisms applied to the great plays of Jacobean and Restoration drama. These criticisms are now falling away, due to a resurgence of interest in Spain and a steady trickle of competent translations in English. Under a skillful hand these plays have proved resiliently stage-worthy, and are now making a limited appearance in this country. This is good news for fight directors, for the "cape-and-sword" plays offer us unique opportunities to practice our craft.

Spanish Golden Age Drama is that body of work, contemporary to the age of Shakespeare and Dryden, which represents the first great flowering of literature in the Spanish vernacular. Encompassing the dramatic output of various writers between 1530 and 1700, it includes the comedies of Lope de Vega and the tragedies of Miguel de Cervantes, better known as the author of **Don Quixote**. The plays cover a wide spectrum of subject, form, and theme. Most important to the present discussion are those comedies and tragedies dwelling on the "honor theme" in Spanish drama, the "capa-y-espada" plays. In this genre we find some interesting aspects of, and motivations for, dramatic swordplay that are to a degree foreign to English drama. The following is a cursory treatment of swordplay in Spanish Golden Age Drama. For those interested in learning more about the subject a short bibliography is included.

I must begin with a disclaimer. Though my primary sources are in the Spanish language, my understanding of that language is rudimentary at best. I therefore relied to some extent upon standard translations of the works examined. As the choice, collation and interpretation of material presented here are my responsibility alone, any inconsistencies found in the information presented are of course my sole responsibility.

THE STAGE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SWORDPLAY

The plays of the Spanish Golden Age were performed upon a stage which evolved from the earlier "carros," or pageant wagons,

of the Middle Ages. These wagons were used not only to stage seasonal representations of the life and passion of Christ but also as platforms for court "entertainments" given on the ascension of royalty to the throne or in celebration of a significant victory in the field. Shergold mentions the "joch," tournaments and "exercises in arms" staged for the entertainment of royalty. He describes one such entertainment, occurring in 1269, which contained a metaphorical battle substituting oranges for lethal missiles in a "siege," with the castle being a miniature wooden mock-up mounted on carts being moved into the great hall by men hidden underneath. The castle contained performers on the platform above to act as defenders. The spatial limitations imposed by the size of the carts naturally dictated the number and actions of the combatants on the platforms above.¹ On the coronation of Don Fernando el Honesto in 1414,, another mock siege was staged using leather skins filled with wadding as substitutes for real missiles, the sound effects accompanying them produced by fireworks. This performance was meant as a representation of the taking of Balaguer by the Duke of Gandia and the King.²

These carros eventually gave way to fixed platforms, erected on one end of an inn yard, from which the early theatre troupes performed. These performances were at first in the nature of itinerant jugglers and so-forth, with the occasional "morality play" thrown in. The latter points to the existence of a nascent professional theatre community, and indeed, beginning around 1530, we can find traces of just such professionals in the company of Fernando de Rojas (1465?-1541). These performers played short interludes from the religious pieces for their bread, the inn keepers giving consent presumably because it must have been good for business. In the following two decades Commedia dell 'Arte troupes from Italy made their appearance on the Iberian Peninsula, giving further impetus to the rise of "profane comedy." Native authors began writing for these troupes in the Spanish vernacular, and the Spanish drama was born.

As theatre increased in importance as a popular entertainment, the inn-yard theatres slowly evolved into the "corrales," permanent theatres which retained their rectangular form from their humble origins, but added several more galleries and a small scene house behind the stage. The stage of the Corral del Principe was approximately twenty eight feet wide by twenty three feet deep, excluding the fore-stage which may have been five feet deep. The stage of the Corral de la Cruz was approximately twenty-six feet wide by twenty-nine feet deep. If we take these dimensions to be the median for most permanent corrales, then the dimensions are something like twenty-seven feet wide by twenty-eight feet deep.

¹ N.D. Shergold, *A History of the Spanish Stage from Medieval Times until the end of the Seventeenth Century*, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1967), p. 113.

² Shergold, p. 116.

The physical complexities of arranging a fight on the corrale stage would have mitigated in favor of swords over such pole arms as halberds and pikes. Two combatants with rapiers extended, even when in engagement, easily take up twelve linear feet of stage space if we assume their use of the "Spanish Style" of rapier fight. This would, of course, allow for some freedom of movement on the corrale stage. Halberds and other pole arms, however, often exceeded ten feet in length; two combatants wielding pole arms would occupy fifteen feet of stage space. Keeping in mind that pole arms are often employed in sweeping arcs rather than straight thrusts, we are now talking about a fifteen foot diameter of motion, not a fifteen foot linear progression. Though such a fight could be and probably was staged, as is done occasionally today, such scenes would have severely restricted playing space, and would have presented definite hazards in performance. These obstacles could be overcome through compressing the fencing distance and limiting the number of combatants to several pair or less, the latter a point we shall take up in our examination of the riot scene in Lope de Vega's **Fuente Ovejuna**.

THEME AND ITS INFLUENCE ON SWORDPLAY

One of the primary themes of the Spanish Golden Age is that of honor. It is not my purpose here to present a comprehensive treatise on Spanish honor; that has been done elsewhere more effectively.³ It is important for our discussion, however, to point out that the violence found in Spanish Golden Age drama, where it touches the subject of honor, is both motivated and indispensable to the play as a physical manifestation of the honor code. Muir quotes Calderon as saying that "honor subjects are the best because they affect everybody deeply."⁴

The concept as practiced in Renaissance Spain is somewhat remote to us now, and therefore bears a closer examination. First it must be said that the Spanish sense of honor was not confined to a mere pursuit of glory. Such a rarified desire, limited for the most part to the warrior class, would by definition have excluded the peasant class. Honor in Spain worked in a larger context, encompassing every social class but the very lowest, representing a social contract between the individual and his peers. It carried connotations of personal trustworthiness, social reputation and rank, and purity of blood.

Honor could not be conferred by the individual upon himself, but could only be conferred upon him by his contemporaries. Lope de Vega's characters discuss this very aspect

³ See Weiger, Larson, and Honig for a full discussion of the topic.

⁴ Calderon de la Barca, **Calderon, Three Comedies**, trans. by Kenneth Muir and Ann MacKenzie, (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1985), p. xxii. Henceforth all citation to plays contained in this volume referred to by play title with accompanying page citation.

of honor as social contract in the play *The Comendadores of Cordoba*, Act VI. 290b-291a:

VEINTICUATRO. *Do you know what honor is?*

RODRIGO. *I know that it is something which man does not have in himself...*

VEINTICUATRO. *Well said. Honor is that which is contained in another: no man grants honor to himself; rather, he receives it from others. To be a man of virtue and to have merits is not to be honored, but to give reasons why those who associate with one should honor him. He who removes his hat when he passes a friend or elder honors him; likewise, he who places him at his side, and he who seats him in the place of distinction; from which it is clear that honor resides in another and not in oneself.*⁵

The corollary to this social contract should of course be obvious: once lost, the honor one derives from one's neighbors might never be regained, hence the need to fiercely protect it. Further, once lost, the only truly irrefutable evidence of honor regained to the sixteenth century mind would be written in blood. Honor in this context must be earned through deed.

This concept is foreign to our predominately "White Anglo-Saxon" dominated society in the latter part of the twentieth century. Physical violence is now considered a social faux pas among the middle-class: not so in the world of the sixteenth and seventeenth century Spain. An outworking of honor in the context of social contract is that no serious affront should go unpunished; if the insult were not expunged instantly through formal apology or subsequent blood, the imputation or insult was proved by default, and the injured party would be shunned as unworthy of society. In this spirit Don Luis in *Mornings of April and May* declares: "wheresoever I find a man who stains my honor and my name, I greet him with the sword, and not with words; dispensing with courtesies, because the sword is Honor's clearest voice."⁶

Purity of blood, as the Spaniards knew it, was another aspect of honor that played into the violent side of the culture. The concept of purity of blood, bearing as it does connotations of racial superiority, was a reflection of the nation's immediate past. Iberia, as a province of the latter Roman Empire, contained a fair share of Christian converts. This population increased rather than decreased with the invasion of the Visigoths in the third through sixth centuries. Then, in the eighth century and continuing through the

⁵ Passage quoted by Donald Larson, *The Honor Plays of Lope de Vega* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1977), p. 5.

⁶ Larson, p. 123.

thirteenth, a new invader appeared on the scene, the Moors of Islam. They conquered the majority of the peninsula and imposed their own religion on the countryside. As a matter of policy they tolerated both Jew and Christian to a surprising extent. The Christian nobility, however, did not share this enlightenment. The Christian warriors of Northern Spain set about liberating their brethren in the eleventh and twelfth centuries, a process culminating in the fall of Grenada in 1492 at the hands of Ferdinand and Isabella. Thereafter, any genealogy admitting Moorish or Jewish ancestry was looked on askance as being unworthy of the conquering peoples. One's purity of blood became a legal and a martial ground for defense.

This racist factor reenforced the proprietorial attitude toward the family's females, as social standing could be advanced or degraded by the female's progeny. Bastardy was to be avoided at all costs, even to the death of the kinswoman. This theme appears in several of Lope de Vega's plays. More often, however, such a "blood feud resulted in the men of the family falling in personal combat, either in defense of the family reputation, or as the accused seducer of the female;" "For in love's rivalries a rigid code of honor rules; and it demands redress. Although it is the woman who offends, it is the man who dies."⁷

Thus the genesis of the stock character in English drama, the Spaniard overly tender of his honor. Honor was founded on the twin pillars of social contract and purity of blood, with all of the attendant ramifications of personal integrity, social position, and so forth. It was a personal and familial possession vulnerable to false report. Hull writes, "The world at large is inclined to make easy snap-judgements and can impute dishonor by misunderstanding. The only defense against this oppressive force of opinion is an unrelenting watchfulness and a correspondingly arrogant self-assertion."⁸ This "arrogant self-assertion" could brook no challenge, however slight.

THE WEAPONS OF THE CORRALES

With the exception of **Fuente Ovejuna** I found the sword the primary weapon in scenes of stage violence. Perhaps this reflects my limited access to the literature rather than any trend in the Spanish drama itself, for Shergold records the following as weapons also to be found on-stage: "...arquebusses, halberds, pikes, pistols...."⁹ For the purposes of our discussion it might be profitable to turn to the Spanish rapier, and its attendant style of fence, in hopes of establishing some kind of picture of stage combat in the Spanish Golden Age.

⁷ Larson, p. 103.

⁸ John Weiger, **The Valencian Dramatists of Spain's Golden Age** (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1976), p. 17.

⁹ Shergold, pp. 205-6.

We are perhaps fortunate that fencing style and weapons changed so little in seventeenth and eighteenth century Spain, for it facilitates our investigation of how swordplay was staged. Unlike England and France, who discarded the rapier during this period for increasing refinements of the short sword whose attributes imposed their own demands on techniques, Spain retained its preference for the rapier or rapier-like instrument, thereby bringing some national uniformity and stability to swordsmanship. The only other edged weapon to gain some currency as a dueling weapon, the peasant navaja or long knife, was easily adapted to the same foot patterns, though its use compressed the fencing distance and relied on swifter cutting movements.¹⁰

The rapier, a descendant of the medieval estoc, or thrusting sword, came into being in the latter decades of the fifteenth century during the Italian Peninsular Wars. The Spaniards no doubt came in contact with this weapon in their Italian campaigns, and soon adopted the rapier as the standard side-arm for officers and nobility. From four foot six inches to five foot four inches in overall length, it possessed a thin, double-edged blade and an increasingly complicated system of guards and counter-guards for the hilt. Primarily a thrusting weapon, the rapier was exponentially more lethal than the standard cutting weapon as the thrust produced internal damage to organs far beyond the power of contemporary medicine to treat.

Due to its inordinate length, the rapier was better suited to the private quarrel than the battlefield, where quick cut and thrust were the order of the day. The length of the early rapiers made them point-heavy and unwieldy, requiring the fencer to rely on a secondary weapon, usually a dagger or cape weighted with lead, for defence. The rapier at this juncture was then a purely offensive weapon. Rosura, the female protagonist in **Life is a Dream**, is armed with rapier and dagger.¹¹ Calabazas adds to these weapons a small shield in **A House with Two Doors is Difficult to Guard**.¹² The Marquis, in **The Trickster of Seville**, suggests

¹⁰ Arthur Wise, **The History and Art of Personal Combat**, (London: Hugh Evelyn, 1971), p. 184. One possible use of the navaja on stage might be found in Lope de Vega's **Fuente Ovejuna**, though the conjecture is based more on the social status of the characters than on any evidence in the play itself.

¹¹ Calderon de la Barca, **Life is a Dream**, trans. Roy Campbell, **Life is a Dream and other Spanish Classics**, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Applause Books, 1985), p. 281.

¹² **A House with Two Doors is Difficult to Guard**, in Calderon, **Three Comedies**, p. 61.

the use of rapier and cape, advising Don Juan to "wrap this cloak" around the arm, "The better so to deal your stroke."¹³

The rapier underwent significant changes in the sixteenth century, and the version in general use during the life of Lope de Vega and Calderon was considerably shorter and more supple than the earlier weapons. The result was a sword of from three feet two inches to four feet in overall length, with a slim double-edged blade, a cup hilt, knuckle guard and quillions; the "Errol Flynn Special" so familiar to us today.

These innovations in the original Italian rapier required new techniques of fencing, which discarded secondary weapons and relied instead on a system of parries with the rapier itself. The Spanish style of fencing which slowly evolved was distinctive from other styles in that it relied on geometric foot patterns and strict form, becoming one of the most popular systems of self-defense in Europe. Its most famous proponents, Hieronimo de Caranza and Don Luys Pacheco de Narvaez, dominated Spanish fencing for two centuries. Caranza's **De la Philosophia de las Armas**, appearing in 1569, and Narvaez's **Libro de las Grandezas de la Espada** in 1599, both widely read and translated into most of the European languages, stressed a cool deliberateness in attack and defense.¹⁴

In an over-simplified form, the Spanish system placed both opponents on the circumference of an imaginary circle, whose diameter was determined by the rapiers held at arms length and meeting "in engagement" in the center. Great emphasis was placed on the need to keep one's arm extended, with the rapier pointing directly at the opponent's face. One's body was slightly angled away from the opponent's when holding a secondary weapon; i.e., dagger or cloak. When the rapier was used alone, the body was positioned perpendicular to the opponent, much like the modern fencing position. Unlike modern fencing, however, the body remained stiffly upright. Advance was made along the chord of the circle, in small steps, concluding with a thrust from the wrist forward, or a cut to the head delivered from the wrist. Blade movements were small and discreet, taking advantage of the length of the blade and the lethality of the point. Unlike the Italian style, which was more catlike in movement and free form in attack, the overall impression was one of cool control, with graceful, dance-like movements. The style must have been quite effective, or else it would not have survived for so long nor have been adopted so widely outside of Spain.¹⁵

¹³ Tirso de Molina, **The Trickster of Seville**, trans. Roy Campbell, **Life is a Dream and Other Spanish Classics**, Ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Applause Books, 1985) p. 178.

¹⁴ Wise, pp. 48-53, pp. 107-117, p. 182.

¹⁵ Currently the foremost expert in the United States in Spanish style of rapier fencing is Joseph Martinez, Washington and Lee

An advantage of the Spanish style of fence, at least in terms of theatricality, was the display of cool courage it required of its practitioners, for the movements were exact and demanded both courage and skill in their execution. Any untoward display of passion or lack of control would immediately result in the opponent piercing the guard, established by the straight armed presentation. Once inside the guard the body was left more or less unprotected. To prevent this one had to remain calm, anticipating the opponent's attack and making discreet adjustments with the blade. Larger or more violent reaction only served to open the guard further. The necessity of remaining calm is alluded to in **Mornings of April and May**, Act II,iii, when Don Juan, who has listened behind an arras to a rival arranging an assignation with his beloved, says, "It would be folly unparalleled to fight him when his words have nearly struck me dead."¹⁶ Such dispassionate courage, in combination with the graceful movements and upright posture of the form, no doubt gave much dignity to the appearance of the fencer. It certainly would have presented a dramatic stage picture.

EXAMPLES OF THE VIOLENCE WITHIN PERIOD PLAYS

How did the playwrights of the Spanish Golden Age employ violence in support of the action and thought of the play? Was it necessary to include such scenes in order to tell an effective tale? Certainly not. Not all plays of the period contain violence. However, it is interesting to note that implied if not overt violence played a role in the dramatic structure of the majority of popular plays presented in the corrales. The theme of honor dominates the genres of comedy and tragedy in this period, reflecting the preoccupations of a wider society in flux. Spain the the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries experienced an astounding expansion, from third-rate continental power to world empire. The inhabitants of Iberia naturally felt pride and a certain ambition in playing a role in this expansion. Blood lines took on a heightened importance, reaching down even to the village level, as reflected in Lope de Vega's **Fuente Ovejuna**.

The majority of the first two acts of the play are taken up in painting the Commendador as a true villain. He rapes what woman he will, strikes an old man over the head with a staff, ignores all reasonable advice, and accepts no check upon his personal power. Through such actions he forfeits the right to the peasants' loyalty, a concept foreign to the Spain of a century before. The uprising acts as a scene-a-fere, an obligatory scene which brings the culprit to justice. In this the author duplicates in the audience the desire for, and satisfaction of, the revenge that the character's collective honor demands of them. Certainly the King and Queen cannot help the village at this juncture, as the Commendador of Calatrava is beyond their influence, a state of affairs set up in Act I. The only solution

University, Virginia, who taught me the form and to whom I am deeply indebted.

¹⁶ **Mornings in April and May**, in Calderon, **Three Comedies**, p. 103.

left is revolution. Structurally, then, the stage violence is very important to the play as a whole in that it brings the plot forward to a point where, once the Commendador is disposed of, it can be resolved by the King and Queen. This final twist, replacing an arbitrary feudal "robber baron" with the authority of the royal family, reflected the struggle of the Hapsburg royal house and its predecessor the house of Aragon-Castile against a restive and semi-feudal nobility. In this way Lope de Vega avoided charges of treason.

How was the riot scene staged in Lope's day? I can only conjecture, given the evidence at my disposal. Earlier in Act III, when the decision is made by the villagers to rise up, Esteban exhorts them to "Grab swords and pikes and cudgels, crossbows and slings and anything you can!"¹⁷ Whether these are the weapons used in the subsequent revolt we can only guess, but it does not seem unlikely. As long as only the Commendador is involved in on-stage fighting against the "host" of villagers, stage space would have been adequate. In this scenario the villagers would be ranged on one side of the stage, occupying approximately fifteen square feet of space, the Commendador occupying six or less on the other side. However, if soldiers of the Commendador are introduced, then we have a small battle on-stage, which would have presented serious choreography considerations in the corrales.

In addition to a note concerning the broken blade in *Mornings of April and May*, discussed below, we find an intriguing reference to an unorthodox stage weapon, the whip, in Lope de Vega's *Fuente Ovejuna*. In Act III we find the peasants rising against their evil Commendador and his henchman Flores. Again, the note is contained in the dialogue itself, not in the stage direction. The stage direction reads "Suddenly enter Flores from within, Mengo pursuing him." Mengo, the *gracioso*, or comic figure, had previously been flogged with a whip by Flores, represented through off-stage noise and dialogue. The dialogue which follows indicates some form of whip in use on-stage.

FLORES. *Have mercy, Mengo, it was not my fault: I was obeying orders.*

MENGO. *If you don't deserve it 'cause you are a filthy pimp you more than merit it for flogging me!*

PASCULA. *You give him to us women, Mengo, now. Stop flogging him. Just hand him over. Lovely!*¹⁸

¹⁷ Lope de Vega, *Fuente Ovejuna*, trans. Roy Campbell, *Life is a Dream and other Spanish Classics*, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Applause Books, 1985), p. 117.

¹⁸ Lope de Vega, p. 121.

Perhaps, instead of using an actual leather quirt, which would have been dangerous even in expert hands, the actors frayed hemp and painted it brown to resemble leather. Regardless of how the property was constructed, it is interesting that the Flores-Mengo exchange, and the earlier attack by the Commendador on old Esteban, occurred in full view of the audience. Outright violence dealt directly to the body of a player is relatively rare, the sword thrusts by tradition being delivered "off-target:" (that is, without touching, the blow being masked in some way from the audience). In the riot scene where we find the above incident, the note indicating swordplay is "Exuent fighting, the Commendador driven back by the insurgents."

Violence, implied and overt, provided much underlying suspense to "honor plays" whose action would seem trivial without the threat of confrontation. Swordplay is used to this purpose in Calderon's **Mornings in April and May**. The violence in Act III, ii seems at first ill-motivated; a mere element of suspense. Don Juan enters the Park to follow and confront his supposedly unfaithful love Dona Ana. He is discovered prematurely, however, by the brother of a man he had killed prior to the play's events, a man he had caught in a compromising position in Dona Ana's garden. They fight, the duel ending in a draw when Don Luis's sword is broken, Don Juan allowing his opponent to withdraw in order to fetch another sword.

Why should the protagonist face this secondary character at just such a juncture? Throughout the play Don Juan's mind has been poisoned by this first seeming betrayal of the "man in the garden." He therefore suspects Dona Ana of accepting the courtship of a second, more foolish suitor, Don Hipolito. The swordplay occurs immediately prior to the denouement, during which Dona Ana is proven innocent. The fight serves to remind the audience that any confrontation of the major characters could result in bloodshed. In this sense it does serve to inject the farce with an element of suspense.

The duel serves the further purpose of illuminating Don Juan's character. Up to this point in the play Don Juan has shown a rather credulous and impetuous spirit. He certainly has shown himself to be ungenerous towards Dona Ana, even in the face of his friend's protestations. In accepting the duel a l'outrance, without prior warning, he shows himself to be courageous and daring. In allowing his opponent to withdraw after his sword is broken, Don Juan redeems his generosity, and opens up the possibility that he will find it within himself to act generously with Dona Ana, which of course he eventually does.

Finally, the duel eventually sets up the conditions for reconciliation between Don Juan to Dona Ana, and Don Luis to Don Juan. In the final scene, in gratitude for his previous gallantry, Don Luis releases Don Juan from his blood debt. Dona Ana is proved to have told the truth all along, and the play moves to a close.

There is an interesting side note to this armed confrontation which is found not in the stage directions, but in the dialogue itself. The stage direction indicates merely the general action "They fight."

Immediately after this direction is Don Luis' line "My sword is broken," indicating that the weapon is broken on-stage during the duel. We know of property swords that were jointed at the forte, so that, by throwing a switch in the guard, the foible, or final six inches of the blade, fell off. Perhaps this is an example of the use of the property in Spain.

Another point to be made before we move on concerns the curious insistence by Don Luis that he be armed before he pardon his opponent. He says, "And if I did not say so at once, it was because, being weaponless, I would not have you think that it was fear which made me pardon you."¹⁹ No doubt Don Luis would prefer death to a seeming cowardice, regardless of the fact that he had determined to release Don Juan from blood guilt as a result of the duel. This serves to illustrate the severe restrictions which honor placed on both victor and vanquished.

The only battle, other than that in **Fuente Ovejuna**, which I came across in my reading was that represented in **The Siege of Numantia**. Here the difficulties of staging were avoided altogether by representing battle through off-stage noise. This would be in accordance with strict neo-classical rules as laid down by Rey de Artieda, who felt that staged violence was a violation of decorum.²⁰ Perhaps this also explains the reluctance of Lope de Vega to show the death of the Commendador on-stage, though of course this could also be due to the satisfaction the author wished to give in describing after-the-fact the death of this arch-villain too gruesome to depict on-stage.

The nicety of Artieda's argument was certainly lost on Tirso de Molina when it came to Don Gonzalo's death in **The Trickster of Seville**. Don Juan, fresh from the rape of Dona Ana, is confronted by her father Don Gonzalo. They draw their swords. The stage direction for once is clear as to the action expected of the swordsman. It reads, "Don Juan, thrusting with sword." One line later Don Gonzalo declares, "He's given me my death."²¹ Obviously the giving and the receiving of the thrust were in full view of the audience. This could be staged through body position, Don Gonzalo masking the final blow by bending his body over the point, or it could have been staged using the "leather pilch" of Elizabethan England, a short leather jerkin worn under the doublet and providing protection from thrusts from blunted swords.

The swordplay of the scene functions much like that of the fencing scene in **Hamlet**. It establishes a context in which the guilty will be punished, and the play will be resolved. Don Gonzalo's death leads inexorably to Don Juan's final reckoning at

¹⁹ *Mornings in April and May*, in Calderon, *Three Comedies*, p. 129

²⁰ Weiger, p. 23.

²¹ Tirso de Molina, p. 180.

the hands of Don Gonzalo's ghost. The difference is that in **Hamlet** the reckoning is immediate and all encompassing as it brings to an end the subplots involving Laertes, Gertrude, Claudius, and Hamlet, as well as the central conflict. In **The Trickster of Seville** the revenge is limited, in that it encompasses only Don Juan's death, not that of his lackey Catalinon. It does, like the final scene in **Hamlet**, eventually lead to the conclusion of the central theme within the crypt.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Hopefully in the near future the commercial theatre will make more demands on the profession of the fight director. At present, however, the majority of our Society's fight choreographers work on the college campus, at least in an instructional capacity. We find our talents called for in an endless cycle of Shakespearean and Restoration student productions. Spanish Golden Age drama offers an interesting alternative, in that it makes use of a different combat style within a larger context of a society preoccupied with honor themes. These are plays that hold the interest and excite the audience, and they deserve a wider viewing. The campus is a good place to start.

As for commercial and regional theatre, increasing numbers of decent translations of these plays are becoming available. For all intents and purposes they are a body of "lost" plays. These works have enjoyed production on the Continent and Latin America for the past thirty years; strange that they have had only a limited production here. Perhaps their time has come. They'd certainly be challenging for us to work on.

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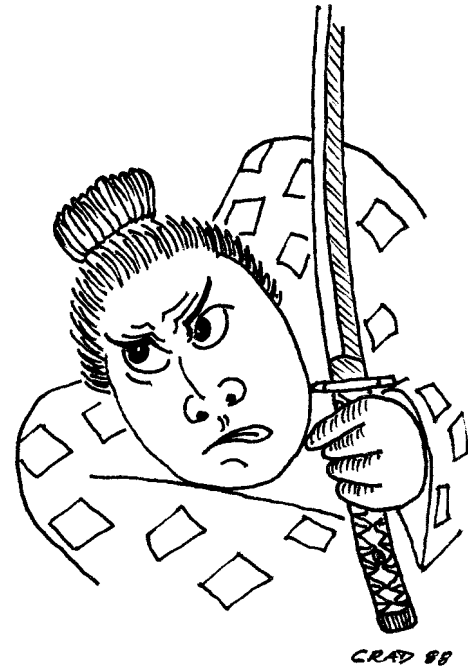
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ROUNDABOUT RASHOMON (A REVIEW)

by Richard J. Gradkowski

Akira Kurosawa's 1950 film **Rashomon** created a sensation when it was first screened in Europe and the United States. Who can forget the impact of feral bravura by Toshiro Mifune? Not only was it the advance guard of an entire genre of Japanese films, but it had a profound effect on fight choreographers and on their conceptions of the staging of combat. It would be interesting to explore this thesis thoroughly (may I suggest that one of our students make it a paper?) but I will summarize the effect by simply bringing attention to the contrast between any of the 1930's Hollywood extravaganzas a la Errol Elynn, and the 1977 film fights in **The Duelists**. The fights in **Rashomon** thus act as a pivot in choreographic tradition, marking a transition point between the Hollywood approach and the "verismo" style adopted by William Hobbs. Not only was the depiction of combat revolutionized by **Rashomon**, but the exposition of the plot placed an overt demand on the particular characterizations in each combat. Readers will recall that there are two distinct fight sequences between the nobleman and the bandit, done from the viewpoint of the bandit and of the woodcutter. Thus the actor/combatant is faced with the task of radically altering his subjective intention in each of the fights, while working within the framework of the appropriate combat techniques. This attention to the inner workings of the combatant's mind transcends the demands of even an apocalyptic fight such as in **Hamlet**. If the actors in **Hamlet** do an indifferent fight, it simply means that the play peters out instead of reaching a satisfying climax. However, in **Rashomon**, the whole point of the story is the working of the inner mind and how this is expressed publicly. If the fights are done badly, the whole thing fails.



In 1959, I had the opportunity to see the original production of **Rashomon** at the Music Box Theater on Broadway. Rod Stieger and Claire Bloom starred with Neil Willman as the husband, and the fights were choreographed by Tarao Mori. Mori was an eminent Kendoist, Hachidan and national champion of Japan, as well as a redoubtable Western style fencer (in 1953 he was Pacific Coast sabre champion). Those of us who played against him still recall his flank cut, called an O-Do in Kendo, which sounded like a pistol shot against the breastplate. Prior to his death in 1969 he helped found the U.S. Kendo Federation.

The play, by Fay and Michael Kanin, generally followed the film's adaptation of two short stories by Ryunosuke Akutagawa. Basically, it attempts to point out the radical differences in our perception of truth, depending upon one's viewpoint and self interest. It tends to try to cover too much philosophical ground and was criticized for this overreaching in reviews. It ran for one hundred fifty nine performances.

When I heard that the Roundabout Theater off Union Square was going to restage **Rashomon** and that our David Leong was going to do the fights, I immediately rushed to buy a ticket. I had just seen **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern** there (fights by

Carrier and Bailey) and was looking forward to another entertaining spectacle. Unfortunately, I was disappointed.

The Roundabout's production of *Rashomon* suffers from some organic defects, which even the valiant efforts of David Leong cannot rescue. Aside from some obvious anachronisms in the script, such as referring to an effete nobleman of the Nara-Heian period as a "samurai," and a reference to a "window," there were some major problems in the staging. The nobleman carried a non-Japanese type of bow and instead of a tachi slung sword typical of this period, wears a single daito. David had some severe problems outfitting the cast, finally compromising with some homemade versions of near-appropriate weapons. But the effect to me was unsatisfying (I will admit that I may not be easily satisfied). I thought that, with a little effort, the bandit's sword could have been better represented as a Ken type, which would have been plundered from a dolman tomb, and which type would reasonably have acted as the bait to entrap the nobleman.

When I first saw the stage surface, I expected trouble. The unitary set is divided into thirds: left, center, and right. The center third, where the combats take place is sloped approximately thirty degrees towards the audience like a hillside, with steps, outcroppings, stage rocks, and other trip hazards. It is to David's and the cast's credit that no one slipped or had a serious accident in the fights and other rough and tumble activities. This difficult space is fully used and the combatants moved very well.

The blocking of the first fight is good, with the combatants making full use of the awkward stage area. The styles of combat are generally appropriate, with the bandit issuing some eclectic motions, while the nobleman displays more formal schooling. However, in this period of Japanese combat techniques, swordplay was most often done on horseback and would therefore have had a simpler vocabulary as well as an emphasis on one handed strokes. I felt that these aspects could have been more explicitly developed.

The second fight, which illustrates the woodcutter's observation of events, was disappointing to me more for emotional reasons than for any technical faults. The fight is staged in a comedic "slapstick" manner. It's funny all right, but the situation is not funny. To begin with, two men are forced to fight to the death through their compulsion to conform to certain ideals. They are fully aware of the devastating power of their blades and that one false move will be fatal, yet in spite of their fear, they face up to each other. It's not a pleasant situation, and the heroic attitudes of the first fight (recounted by the bandit) are rectified. This is where "verismo" should be emphasized. Instead, the confrontation is trivialized.

Perhaps someday James Saito (the bandit) and Phillip Moon (the husband) can arrange to take an SAFD workshop. I have the feeling that any production of *Rashomon* unhappily faces the problem of immediate comparison with Kurosawa and Mifune. They are a tough act to follow, especially in view of the limitations imposed upon our fight choreographer. A flawed script, indifferent

directing, and limited actor/combatants make it hard to perform miracles of stagecraft.

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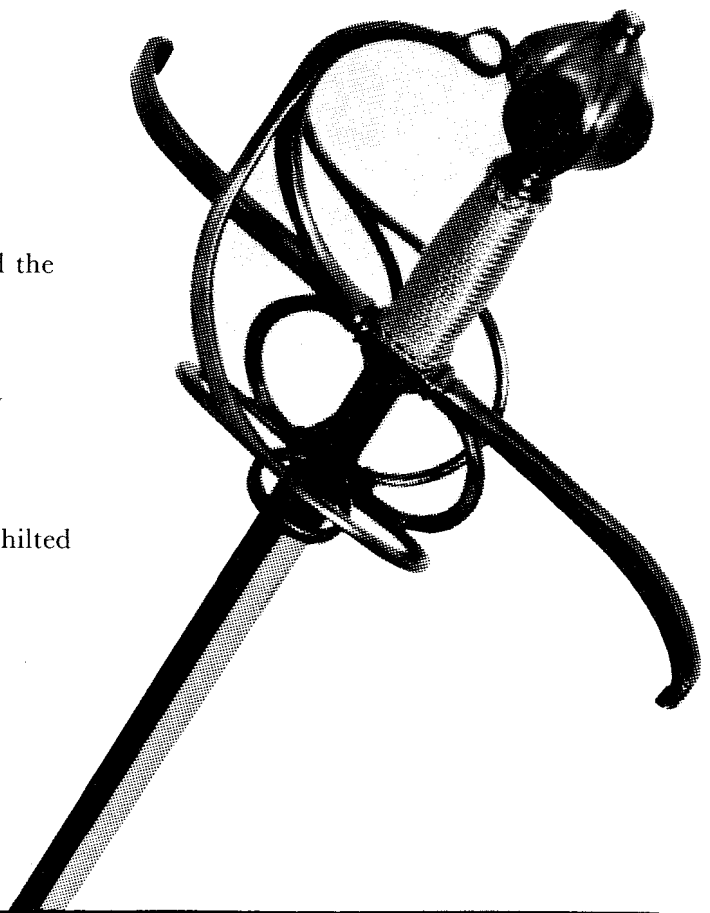
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AND FOR HIS SABER MOST ESPECIAL

by Charles Conwell

"My lord, his Majesty bade me signify to you that he has laid a great wager on your head." Osric is dressed in a navy blue blazer, white flannels, and an ascot. As he speaks to Hamlet, two liveried footmen begin taping a long, six-foot-wide piste on the floor of a theater undergoing renovation, which is the set for the Mark Lamos production of *Hamlet* starring Richard Thomas. The footmen and Osric imply that there will be a fencing match whether Hamlet wants one or not. "I commend my duty to your lordship." Osric backs into the center-line tape extended between the two footmen who are completing the piste. Surrendering his fragile dignity, he leaves the stage untangling the tape from his trousers.

Hamlet has already shot Polonius with a revolver. The Danish guards have confronted the ghost with M-16's. Laertes has led an attempted coup with an UZI machine gun. Mel Gussow of the *New York Times* wondered if Laertes and Hamlet would duel with switchblades. They didn't. They used modern sabers.

As a fight director confronted by this modern production concept, I could have chosen epees or sabers. The foil's very apparent blade flexibility and its small guard eliminate it as a good theatrical weapon. I chose sabers with epee blades. (This combination is also the most practical and economic choice for teaching courtsword, rapier, and nineteenth-century saber.) Sabers allow an actor-combatant to credibly cut AND thrust. (I am much too much of a purist to cut with an epee.) The epee blade gave the sabers a more substantial appearance and made the fatal thrust into Claudius more credible. After choosing the saber, I began the delicate balance between the reality of competitive fencing and the demands of theatrical entertainment.

The first imperative of modern fencing is the mask. I established the convention that the masks were removed between bouts. This allowed the actors to speak with their faces unobstructed. My competitive fencing master, James Murray, pointed out that successful fencers remove their masks by grabbing the bottom of the mask and pulling up and back. Unsuccessful fencers grab the top of the mask and pull down and forward. The masks permitted certain attacks to the face that are impossible in stage fencing without the use of masks: a slightly out of distance cheek cut crossing directly in front of the face, for example. Most importantly, the masks clarified the distinction between the fencing match and the fight that follows the wounding of Hamlet. When Hamlet attacks Laertes without a mask, the audience knows that the proceeding has taken a serious turn. This distinction is not as apparent in the maskless seventeenth century rapier and dagger fencing.

Just after "Since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes? Let be," Laertes entered alone in formal fencing whites (long socks, knickers, and saber jacket). Holding his mask and glove, Stephen Pelinski (over six feet tall) looked elegant and formidable. After a moment's pause Claudius entered

with his court. There were twenty-two actors onstage in Hartford for the fencing match. Military attaches brought Hamlet his jacket, mask and glove. He put them on over casual slacks and an athletic jersey. Two other attaches brought in four sabers. Mark Lamos decided that Osric was not party to the unbated weapon conspiracy. This necessitated a quick move on Laertes' part when one of the attaches moved toward Hamlet with the sharp saber. The buttoned tip of one saber-epee was actually ground off. This was not apparent to most of the audience. I assumed that observant audience members in the front rows would perceive the difference in weapons. The epee button is a substantial safety factor. This is the ONLY play in which I would recommend its removal. Osric presided as a hilariously incompetent fencing director assisted by a general and a gentleman as judges who knew what they were doing. The fencers saluted the king and each other. They assumed the third guard position and the match began.

My choreography was guided by two basic choices. Laertes, the more aggressive of the two fencers, would cut and thrust exclusively to Hamlet's jacket in a murderous attempt to penetrate it. Hamlet would principally parry and counter-cut to the head and cheek in an innocent effort to score points. I used six cuts: head, left and right cheek, left and right flank, sword arm and one thrust: navel. I used a wrist molinea cut from first parry. All other cuts were made in the modern manner with an extension of the arm and a depression of the thumb.

The most frequently used parries in competitive saber are third, fourth, and fifth. A good third and fourth will protect a saberist from the bottom of his jacket to the top of his mask on either flank. For more theatrical variety I also used high third and high fourth to parry cheek cuts. These parries are disastrous in competitive fencing (they expose the flanks) but distinguish cheek and flank parries for the theatrical audience. First and second are excellent alternatives to third and fourth. A molinea cut from first to head, chest, or stomach is still very effective in competitive saber. Second provides a very quick defense for the right flank when an opponent has provoked a fifth parry with a head feint and then cut under the right arm.

Bout one included three phrases of cutting concluding with a thrust to Hamlet's navel by Laertes. Hamlet countered with a cross-over retreat (two passes backward) and an unsuccessful stop cut met by Laertes guard. Laertes then fleched to head and right flank. A fleche (running attack) is very common in contemporary saber and is a very successful climax to a theatrical bout. Hamlet parried fifth and second and then turning a hundred eight degrees grazed Laertes on the back for the disputed first touch. I had originally conceived of Laertes' fleche to the head as a feint, but I discovered that feints don't read well theatrically so I changed it to a parried cut which is much clearer to an audience.

Bout two began with a moment of calm in third guard. Again I followed some vigorous phrases of cutting with a lunge to Hamlet's navel. Again Hamlet evaded by a cross-over retreat. This time Hamlet took advantage of the extended distance created by this retreat. Hamlet fleched unsuccessfully to Laertes' head and left

cheek. A significant crowd murmur ("Hamlet has taken the offensive,") covered Hamlet's return to the appropriate end of the piste. Bout two was substantially longer than bout one because the text requires that Hamlet be "scant of breath" at the end of it. Laertes continued the bout with two aggressive phrases of cutting parried by Hamlet and finally countered with a successful cut to Laertes' right cheek. This cut did not, however, read well to the untrained eye. Mark Lamos did not understand what happened when he watched the fight for the first time. When a competitive fencer is hit on the mask, he feels almost nothing and his head does not move. He is trained, in fact, not even to blink his eyes. When I asked Stephen to react as if he had been slapped on an unprotected right cheek, the second hit became theatrically effective.

By now Laertes was angry and frustrated. Hamlet's comments between bouts two and three did not improve Laertes' frame of mind. Unlike competitive fencers, Hamlet and Laertes changed ends of the piste after each point. The first two bouts had begun with a moment of calm in third guard. As Laertes walked to the other end of the piste to begin bout three, he turned quickly and thrust at Hamlet's navel without assuming guard. This was barely evaded by a cross-over retreat from Hamlet. Hamlet countered with a complicated advancing attack that began with two invitations and concluded with a modern head cut that just missed Laertes' mask and ended in front of his nose. I insisted on precise restraint in this cut in order to contrast the minimal thumb cutting of competitive saber with the angry slashes that were soon to follow. Laertes then fleched to left cheek and right flank. Hamlet parried high fourth and third and then riposted to right flank which was parried in third by Laertes. "Nothing neither way!" The masks came off quickly for air. Laertes was desperate. As Hamlet looked as Osric, Laertes deliberately cut his right bicep with a draw cut. As he cut, Laertes looked directly at Claudius. Laertes then moved off the piste to wait for the poison to take effect.

Hamlet handed his mask to Horatio, examined his wounded arm, and looked at Laertes. Attacking off the piste for the first time, Hamlet slashed across Laertes' chest (out of distance) provoking a counterthrust from Laertes parried in first by Hamlet. Hamlet then attempted an unsuccessful percussion disarm that left both fencers corps-a-corps, their weapons and both arms locked above their heads. As Claudius cried out, "Part them, they are incensed!," Laertes jabbed Hamlet's chest with his knee and pushed him. Hamlet fell backwards retaining both weapons. (Richard Thomas created his own very skillful roll).

After "Nay," to Claudius, Hamlet threw his bated weapon to Laertes. Following "come again," Hamlet began his final assault. Laertes was ferociously driven in a circle around the crowded stage. The crowd scattered; women screamed; one extra stepped between the fencers in a frantic attempt to escape and was almost stabbed; chairs were knocked over or flung aside. After some wild slashes evaded by Laertes, Hamlet paused for a moment and then attacked with perfect form: cutting to head, feinting to crotch, placing the edge of his blade beside the collar of Laertes fencing jacket, and slicing with a draw cut. Laertes grabbed his neck and the fight was over. I first saw this jugular cut in William Hurt's *Hamlet* directed

by Marshall Mason and choreographed by B.H. Barry. I have used it frequently since.

Mark Lamos and I originally decided to leave the blood to the audience's imagination. Late in rehearsal blood was added and used in the first preview. When I returned for closing night, the fight was done without blood. (I think the better choice).

Richard Poe, who played Claudius, was a virile actor. He didn't look like he would let himself be stabbed without a fight. He tried to walk out of the room pursued by Hamlet. We agreed that Hamlet would thrust on the word "work" in "then venom do they work!" Claudius turned and deflected Hamlet's thrust, grabbing the sword with his left hand. Hamlet withdrew his weapon cutting Claudius' palm. Claudius ran downstage into a cul de sac of attendants and was trapped with nowhere to go. He was also in a position that eliminated the possibility of an off-target thrust kill, and Hamlet was using the unbuttoned epee-saber! Hamlet ran to Claudius and grabbed his jacket lapel with his left hand. Hamlet's left foot was forward. Hamlet placed his point on Claudius' navel. (Under his shirt and sport coat, Claudius wore a double-layered canvas stomach protector). Claudius grabbed the tip of the weapon in both hands, bent over, and stepped back on his right foot. Simultaneously Hamlet stepped back on his left foot and extended his sword arm without actually pushing the sword. This created a very effective optical illusion lunge. Hamlet then "pulled" Claudius, his back arched, six feet upstage before retracting his point.

Mel Gussow called the scene an "exciting battle." My work was made very easy by Mark Lamos, Richard Thomas and Stephen Pelinski. Richard is an agile actor and a trained fencer. Although Stephen had never used a saber, he proved a very quick study. Mark provided a creative and exciting context in which to work. He also gave several imaginative suggestions such as the taping of the piste during the Osrice-Hamlet-Horatio scene. I am, of course, indebted to my fencing master, James Murray, who taught me how to compete with a saber and to Paddy Crean for helping me to theatricalize my instruction.

The fencing match in **Hamlet** is one of the most beautifully set up fights in western literature. It never ceases to excite me. It was a special pleasure to recreate it with modern sabers.

After the final performance, Richard said, "Let's do it again sometime." "Yes," I answered, "and next time epees."

DUELING/COMBAT/WEAPONRY BOOKS

on microfilm at Iowa State University

compiled by Gregg Henry

Saviolo, Vincentio, fl. 1595

Vincentio Saviolo His practise. In two bookes. The first intreating the vse of the rapier and dagger. The second, of honor and honorable quarrels. London Printed by Iohn Wolfe. 1595, '94

The second book has special t.p. with imprint date 1594. "Of honor and honorable quarrels" is largely a translation of Girolamo Muzio's "Il duello". cf. Kelso, Ruth. Saviolo and His practise in Modern language notes, v. 39, p. 33-35.

Person, David

Varieties or, A svrveigh of rare and excellent matters... Wherein the principall heads of diverse sciences are illustrated, rare secrets of naturall things unfoulded, &c. Digested into five bookes...by David Person...London, Printed by Richard Badger, for Thomas Alchorn...1635.

Hale, George

The priuate schoole of defence. Or the defects of publique teachers, exactly discovered, by way of obiection and resolution. Together vvith the true practise of the science, set downe in iudicious rules and obseruances; in a method never before expressed. By G.H. London, Printed for I. Helme, 1614.

Saillans, Francois de.

Discovrses of warre and single combat, translated out of French by I. Eliot. London Printed by Iohn Wolfe...1591.

"A treatise of single combate" has special t.p. Running title: A discourse of Christian warre. The author's dedication signed: B. De Loque, pseud. of Francoise de Saillans, cf. Bibl. nat.

Segar, Sir William, d. 1633

The booke of honor and armes. At London, Printed by T. Orwin for: Richard Ihones...1590..

Generally ascribed to Sir William Segar. cf. Brit. mus.

Hopper, George W.

Down the river: or Practical lessons under the Code Duello. By an amateur. With twelve full page illus. by R.L. Stephens. New York, E. J. Hale, 1874.

Swetnam, Joseph. fl. 1617

The schoole of the noble and worthy science of defence. Being the first of any English mans inuention, which

professed the sayd science...Also many other good and profitable precepts and counsels for the managing of quarrels and ordering they selfe in many other matters...London, Printed by N. Okes. 1617.

Selden, John, 1584-1654

The dvello or single combat; from antiquitie deriued into this kingdome of England, with seuerall kindes, and ceremonious formes there of from good authority described. London, Printed by G. E., ld, of I. Helme, 1610.

Chevalier, Guillaume de.

The ghosts of the deceased Sievrs, de Villemor, and de Fontaines. A most necessarie discourse of dvells: wherein is shewed the meanes to roote them out quite. With the Discovrse of valovr. By the Sieur de Chevalier...The 3d ed. reviewed, corr. and augm. in French, and translated by Tho. Heigham, Esquire. Cambridge, Printed by C. Legge, printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1624.

Gt. Brit. Sovereigns, etc., 1603-1625 (James I)

By the King. A proclamation against priuate challenges and combats: vvith articles annexed for the better directions to vsed therein, and for the most iudiciall procedding against offenders. London. Imprinted by R. Barker, 1613, i.e. 1614.

Dated at end: "Giuen at our palace of Westminster the fourth day of February, in the eleuenth yeere of our reigne."

Gt. Brit. Sovereigns, etc., 1603-1625 (James I)

By the King. A proclamation prohibiting the publishing of any reports or writings of duels. London, Imprinted by R. Barker, 1613.

Dated at end: "Giuen at Hinchinbrooke the fifteenth day of October, in the eleuenth yeere of our reigne."

Grassi, Giacomo di,

Giacomo di Grassi his True arte of defence, plainlie teaching..how a man...may safeli handle all sortes of weapons...vvith a treatise of disceit or falsinge: and with a waie or meane by priuate industrie to obtaine strength, iudgement and actiuitie. First written in Italian by the foresaid author, and Englished by I.G....Printed at London. by W. Jaggard, for I.I. aagard, ...1594.

Editor's dedication signed: Thomas Churchyard.

Silver, George, fl. 1599

Paradoxes of defence, wherein is proved the trve grounds of fight to be in the short auncient weapons, and that the short sword hath aduantage of the long sword or long rapier. An the weakenesse and imperfection of the rapier-fights displayed. Together with an admonition to the noble, ancient, victorious, valiant, and most braue nation

of Englishmen to beware of false teachers of defence, and how they forsake their owne naturall fights: with a briefe commendation of the noble science or exercising of armes. London, Printed for E. Bloutn, 1599.

Pallas armata. The gentlemans armorie; wherein the right and genuine use of the rapier and of the sword, as well against the right handed as against the left handed man is displayed..Printed at London by I.D., awson, for Iohn Williams...1639.

Espagne, Jean d, 1591-1659.

Anti-dvello. The anatomie of dvells, with the symptomes thereof. A treatise wherein is learnedly handled, whether a Christian magistrate may lawfully grant a duell, for to end a difference which consisteth in fact. Also, the maner and forme of cambats granted, with the seuerall orders obserued in the proceeding thereof, with the list of such duels, as haue beene performed before the kings of England. Truly and compendiously collected and set forth for the good of soueraigne and subiect. Published by His Maiesties Command. London, Printed by T. Harper for B. Fisher, 1632.

Dvell-ease, a worde with valiant spiritts shewing the abuse of duells, that valour refuseth challenges and priuate combates. Sett foorth by G. F. a defendour of Christian valoure. London, Imprinted by Ann Griffin, 1635.

Beecher, Lyman, 1775-1863.

The remedy for duelling. A sermon, delivered before the presbytery of Long-Island, at the opening of their session, at Aquebogue, April 16, 1806. By Lyman Beecher...First published by request of the presbytery. Re-published by subscription. To which is annexed, the resolutions and address of the Anti-duelling association of New York. New York: Sold at the theological and classical book-store of Williams and Whiting, no. 118, Pearl-street. J. Seymour printer...1809.

Beasley, Frederick, 1777-1845.

A sermon on duelling, delivered in Christ-church, Baltimore, April 28, 1811. By Rev. Frederic Beasley...Baltimore, J. Robinson, 1811.

Gt. Brit. Attorney General, informant.

The charge of Sir Francis Bacon..His Maiesties Attourney Generall, touching duells, vpon an information in the Star-Chamber against Priest and Wright. With the decree of the Star-Chamber in the same cause. London, Printed, by G. Eld, for Robert Wilson...1614.

*For further information you may contact Gregg Henry at
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Ames, Iowa 50011*

BROADWAY MACBETH

by David Leong

This report is submitted to the membership of the Society of American Fight Directors with the hope that there is something that can be gained from this experience.

Many of you know that I was fortunate enough to be selected Fight Director for the Broadway production of **Macbeth**. I considered it quite an honor. As any fight director would do, I researched the play extensively (reading **The Masks of Macbeth** to see how others had handled the fight scenes) even though I had previously staged the fight sequences five times. Preproduction meetings with the director led me to believe that this was to be a very conventional production with few "tricks, effects and magic." The emphasis would be on the acting, the "telling of the story." The director kept saying "I don't want it to look choreographed," and "it needs to look real." So with this in mind, I set about designing the sequences. This is where I started running into the first of many problems, all of which led up to my "withdrawing my services" from the production.

The star of the show insisted on working only during the last hour or forty-five minutes of the day. And even this changed daily, depending on what the star felt like working on. But most of the time was spent working with an actor already fatigued mentally from six hours of acting rehearsals. Many of these sessions were conducted for about fifteen to thirty minutes and capped by a statement, "Let's call it for today; tomorrow I'll be less tired." Most of the early fight rehearsals only guaranteed ten minutes of hard work before breaking for a few minutes. No need to elaborate further on this problem.

Another problem was that we had several different actors cast in the role of Macduff. The last one fortunately came with prior combat experience. Each time a new actor was assigned the role (these changes were due to movement problems or schedule conflicts) the choreography needed to be redone to suit the needs of the actor playing opposite the lead. To compound the problem, the other fight roles had been cast with "non movers" of the first degree. I usually offer feedback to the director of the show in regards to the fight roles but in this instance with so many name stars I could only offer assistance in the small role of young Siward. This is a point that many of you should insist on. **BE PRESENT AT THE CALL BACKS TO HELP THE DIRECTOR SELECT THE PRIMARY FIGHT ROLES.** I know what you are all thinking. Most of the time you are brought in after the casting has been completed. You can only try. Or wait until next time and inform them that you need to see the material you have to work with before beginning the project.

The set design changed five times from conception to the out of town opening. And even then, it was completely thrown out after we opened for a new set designed with a totally different concept. Here again, more changes. In rehearsal I would be given new ground plans on a regular basis. The steepness of the rake (about

three inches to the foot) made it very difficult to move in a safe manner. When working on a steep rake, one can make an attack moving uphill, but try to move quickly down a steep rake and see what happens to your center of gravity. So the choreography needed to be designed to move horizontally and uphill while limiting the downward offensive motion.

The quick two and a half week rehearsal schedule before the opening was definitely a complete absurdity. Getting time on the set (we worked on a mock up rake in rehearsal) is not an easy task for any show, but imagine this one. The entire show moved into the theatre for the usual remounting on the set, with tech and dress in four days. Costumes, which came from London, had to be fitted onto the actors during this time as well. So many times, many, many times, I'd be given the stage at five o'clock to change or restage the fight in half an hour for the eight o'clock curtain. This half hour amounted to about fifteen minutes of actual time due to technicians having to clean the stage and costume fittings. We usually ended by five thirty with frustrated actors concerned for their safety. Occasionally my fight captain and I would be told to "finish it at fight call." This stopped when I told the stage manager that fight calls were not to be considered rehearsals, but were to refresh the actors' memories and review any problem spots from the previous show.

Everyone had their idea of what the fights should look like: the director, the stars, the producers, the actors and of course me. I have no problems being last in line once in awhile but daily remountings based on each individual's opinion grew old fast. Actors complained about lack of rehearsal and safety problems and it came back to me as if it was my mismanagement of time and energy. And guess who instigated the equity Deputy's complaint? Me! The actors came to me and asked if there was anything they could do to help alleviate the problem, and I advised them to report it. So report it they did, and it was somehow miscommunicated by the powers above so it looked like my problem. The Deputy was shocked when the result of his report came back to him.

Lastly, and the most disturbing aspect of the entire project, there was the lack of support given to the fight director during the production. Like all of you I work very hard to please my employers and expect that in return. Information that needed to be given to me was not. Example: I traveled to New York from Washington D.C. at my own expense to conduct the equity and non equity fight call previously advertised in **Backstage**. Two hundred aspiring combatants turned up since the ad listed actors with fight training needed. Immediately after the audition, I was told they were not going to fight in the show!

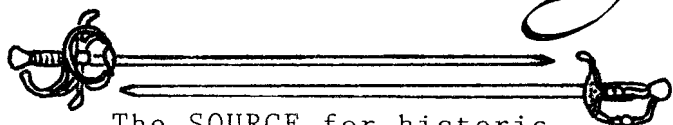
With all this behind me and the option to remain with the show for the rest of the tour, I chose not to do so. Fortunately, my schedule was already committed to other projects. It is my hope that with the new director (the original one was fired after the Baltimore opening) and with some new cast members that the show becomes a great success. After all classical theatre on Broadway doesn't come along all that often. Hopefully it will break the curse affiliated with this production.

Despite my frustrations I managed to gain an incredible wealth of information from this experience. Commercial theatre with it's high overhead cost and "incredible pressure to be good," creates an environment that is very stressful. Working under these conditions allows you to realize just how easy things can be elsewhere.

Would I do it all again? The answer is definitely yes, because I believe in risk taking. It is the only way you grow as an artist. Only next time I'll know more about what to ask before I say yes. The most important thing I have learned from this project is that my art and personal standards are first in line....ahead of my need to earn the big buck.

Sure, I want to be paid well for what I do, but I also have to feel good about my product. My father told my brother and me when we were young to "chose who we want respect from." And that person has got to be me, before all others.

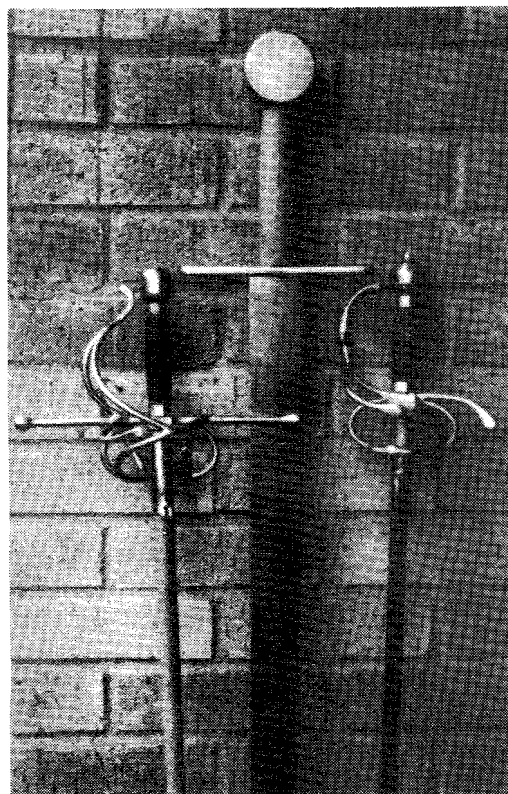
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CHOOSING YOUR WEAPONS

by Rod Casteel

Where would stage combat be without WEAPONRY? For those who place all the emphasis on combat itself and consider weapons as secondary "props," this question puts weapons in their proper perspective. As a swordmaker, may I assure you that, in fact, the quality of your fights will be enhanced or diminished in direct proportion to the quality of your weaponry and the degree of knowledge which you possess (or lack) about weapons. Because weapons are a very important part of your art and skill, you should know all you can about the tools of your trade, historically and functionally. The old adage that "a worker is only as good as his tools" is applicable and true.

Just as the art of stage combat is a highly specialized endeavor, so is the building of quality stage weaponry a specialized art. It's not enough for a weapon to LOOK "okay" when it will be used for stage combat. Did you know that most original weapons seen in museums today would actually FAIL if put to use on the stage?! Why? Not due to any lack of fine workmanship; but because of construction methods, types of steel, and tempering...all of which were generally inferior to what is possible with our current technology.

Theatrical swords, for example, must be capable of enduring far more than a "mere battle!" Consider how many rehearsals are required to create a fight lasting only one minute on stage, not to mention actor training and actual performance time. In a three-week run of **Macbeth**, weapons would see more use and abuse on stage than they would likely sustain in a real WAR!

How a weapon looks is important, but this is not the only basis for judgement. How it is made, materials used, tempering and method of construction are absolutely crucial. Any supplier and/or maker of weapons for stage combat should have a thorough knowledge of these areas. If he does not, he is misleading his customers and "kidding" himself. Few sword makers are driven to build durable weapons and guarantee their work. Very few sources exist for COMBAT-GRADE weapons today. Most goods on the market (especially the commercial variety) are made for those who want a "decorator" to hang over their fireplace. While such "weapons" may look real, they are only "mock-ups." Don't be fooled! Know WHO you're dealing with! And remember that there is "no substitute" for your personal knowledge.

By now, it should be rather obvious that there is a very great deal to be gained by learning as much as possible about weaponry. Speaking of the sword alone, there are an incredible number of types and varieties. Volumes have been written about hilts; and more volumes have addressed the study of blades. Don't let this overwhelm you. Sure, the subject is vast in the extreme, and I seriously doubt that anyone could ever learn "all" there is to know about weapons. In fact, this is why it holds such interest for me:

there's always something ahead, something new to discover, and more beyond that. There's always something to look forward to.

Now, let's consider this broad topic in terms of information which would be useful to you as Society members. One reference which is sure to enhance your knowledge of historic weaponry in general and the sword in particular is Ewart Oakeshott's **European Weapons and Armour**. The evolution of the sword and rapier hilt is only one portion of the book, and is very adequately presented; further, it shows what was actually used in any given period of history. Everyone who practices the combat arts should have this book as a reference. Theatre production people assume that you possess the expertise which they lack. Otherwise, why would they need your services? You are expected to know "all about" fights and weapons, to offer sound advice, and to assume these problems. Whether pleased or disappointed, they WILL tell others about you. Take care to be sure you're imparting correct information. Your knowledge and skill are your power for success!

Selecting quality weapons which will work for most historic periods needn't be as complex as it appears. It is possible to be well-equipped by purchasing a few carefully chosen pieces. Ideally, it's best to try to own weapons in pairs, because you're prepared to work under any conditions without worrying about someone else's weapons being adequate. And, you can justify this expense when you consider that your weapons should soon PAY FOR THEMSELVES. Yes...I said "pay for themselves." Whenever you use your own weapons in a production (and WHY shouldn't you?), you should charge a RENTAL FEE. If you're not, you're "eating" your own blade depreciation! This is not a sound business practice and it will also cause you to lose respect with a production. If you "give it away," is it valuable?? If you hadn't thought about renting your weapons, it could allow you to afford the personal armoury you've always wanted.

When you are purchasing a weapon, realize that price is no more an index of quality and durability than appearance. For example, ornamentation and detailing can easily double the price of a sword, while a plainer sword of comparable quality and appearance can be more economical. This is true of the "economy" grade swords which I build. Quality is every bit as good as my "Deluxe" grade, which is fancier and more expensive but not actually superior. You could drop either grade from a two-story building and the steel hilts would not break! (They're guaranteed)!

So, what makes a weapon combat worthy?

1. COMBAT GRADE HILTS SHOULD GENERALLY BE OF STEEL.

This happens to be authentic because steel hilts are durable in the extreme and are, therefore, dependable. Cast hilts of softer metals (like brass) may "look pretty," but tend to break easily. (If you happen to be performing when this occurs, it can be embarrassing).

Bronze or brass hilts were not common to military swords intended for serious battle until about the nineteenth century, and most examples are heavy and sturdy. The exception is the **SMALLSWORD**, which could functionally be hilted in brass, bronze, or steel. It had no "appendages" prone to breakage and is typically a light-weight sword, the direct antecedent of modern fencing weapons. **PURPOSE** is the key factor: theatrically, brass hilts have a "warmer" appearance than those of steel; thus, the "golden" color of brass has made it very popular in the theatre.

Meanwhile, steel has a look of serious, no-nonsense realism. Steel can offer two color choices: bright or blued (the heat-blued finish which seems to retard rust, was much used, and is termed a "sanguine" finish).

The main point is: **WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO DO WITH THE WEAPON AND WHAT DO YOU WANT IT TO DO FOR YOU?**

2. SOUND QUALITY

This is a very important factor in theatre and one which is given scant attention by most swordmakers. (It is a speciality of mine and is only one of many specifically theatrical features which I build into my weapons). We all love to hear a nice, melodic ring when blade meets blade. Again, steel is superior to other metals as a sound conductor. Interestingly, most swords used in motion pictures lack sound quality and the same is true of virtually all the weapons I've seen by other makers. If you've wondered about those great sounds you've heard in swordplay in the movies, the sounds are nearly always dubbed in by sound engineers! On stage, we are not so "blessed." We are limited to actual sounds, for better or for worse. Most theatre audiences know nothing of swords except what they've seen on the "late show." But...if you ask them how a sword should sound, they'll tell you that it should RING! (Even though real swords were not made with sound quality in mind, your audience is not wrong about this. Taking liberties with the real world is the essence of theatre and "truth" is whatever we want it to be).

To summarize points one and two, the **GENERAL RULE FOR HILTS IS**: they should possess great **DURABILITY**, **SOUND QUALITY**, and **SHOULD REQUIRE MINIMAL MAINTENANCE** (i.e., hilts should be either solid, of one-piece construction for the guard; or, they should have as few component parts as possible. This is why I'm not partial to **CUP-HILTS**: they have too many component parts...cup, quillon assembly, and usually a spacer to cover the tang where modern blades have no ricasso. As a result, cup hilts generally require constant tightening).

3. BLADES

Blades should be of the best quality tempered spring steel. Types of steel and tempering methods are extremely technical areas. As a rule, only those swordmakers who make their own blades can tell you exactly what kind of steel and tempering were used in their product. The best sword steel I've found is HF 5460, so this is

what we use. It is the "Cadillac" of tempered spring steels and is the same steel used to make automobile leaf springs (ever hear of one of those breaking?!). A finished blade should be flexible enough to be lively, and should have "false edges" at least one and a half millimeters thick. Otherwise, a few clashes later, you have a sword that looks like a saw-blade!

TANGS are a critical area for combat blades. It never fails to amaze me that it seems to be standard operating procedure for manufacturers to put a quarter inch diameter tang on everything from an epee to a bastard sword blade. This is completely inadequate and out of proportion for large blades ("built-in obsolescence?"). Tangs should be at least three-quarters of an inch wide at the guard for large swords and should taper narrower at the pommel end but not to one-quarter inch at the threaded section. This is just too "wimpy!" I standardly put five-sixteenth inch tang ends on my rapier blades and for large blades I use sturdy three-eighths inch stock. Now you have something that will hold together for combat. Again, I've seen no indication that manufacturers begin to comprehend the excessive stress which stage combat weapons must endure.

4. CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE

As one who specializes in the construction and design of weaponry made specifically for stage combat, I readily admit that certain "liberties" must be taken with historic methods. For instance, it is historically correct to "rivet over" the end of a tang where it emerges at the base of the pommel. This isn't generally workable for a stage sword, because the hilt will come loose and rattle after a few blows. When this happens, there is no way to re-tighten the hilt short of a complete re-work. So, we must bend the rules of historic accuracy a bit in favor of practical serviceability: Tang ends and pommels must be THREADED (preferably deep), so that hilts can be taken apart, tightened, and blades replaced. In this way, pommels screw on and a hilt can be tightened as needed (there are a few exceptions to this: cavalry sabers are one example, as they most often have no pommel).

A timely word of caution with regard to maintenance; Even the largest tang can break if you OVERTIGHTEN the pommel. When tightening a hilt, hand-tighten the pommel until it is "snug." Now place the pommel in a bench vise and tighten by turning the hilt about ONE FULL TURN past "snug." Strike the sword on a hard surface; if it sounds good, stop. If not, tighten further by quarter-turns (not to exceed a total of TWO FULL TURNS) until the blade rings well. That's really all there is to it.

5. BALANCE AND PROPORTIONING

Even on original weapons, these qualities are often less than ideal in the sense of functional practicality. For instance, the point of balance was frequently several inches in front of the guards and blades were overlong in many cases. For stage purposes, blade length and weight for swords should be proportioned so that one is able to wield them with some ease. A weapon should not be ungainly, too heavy, or too slow; it should handle comfortably and

you should feel that you are able to control it. All component parts of a sword should be carefully proportioned for balance. My clients tell me that my weapons are the best-balanced they have ever used. This is no "accident." I feel balance is a high priority feature, so I aim for what is an ideal balance. I balance epee-bladed rapiers AT the guard; full-size rapiers and large swords are usually balanced about two inches in front of the guard. This seems to be where most people like the balance points; but, if someone prefers a different balance, I can place it where they want it. Weapons are very individual and personal items.

In my opinion, there is no part nor aspect of a weapon which can be considered "unimportant." An otherwise superb weapon can be made to feel mediocre unless the handle is well-shaped and comfortable to grasp. Be sure you're really happy with a weapon before you buy it, because you'll live with it for a long time.

If you're considering a purchase, be especially wary of retailers. They often offer misinformation in an attempt to "make a sale," while they normally possess little or no real knowledge of the goods they sell. Odds are heavily against acquiring a combat-worthy piece from such sources. Chain cutlery stores are one example of a source to avoid; in short, anyone who does not actually build his own goods is a risky proposition.

I hope this information is useful. It should be enough to enable you to select weapons which will meet your needs and avoid the pitfalls. You don't have to spend a great deal to acquire quality combat pieces. But, again...Do know WHO you're dealing with. Here's wishing you good fortune!

Editor's Note: Rod Casteel is a theatrical armourer by profession and a member of both the Society of American Fight Directors and the Society of Canadian Fight Directors . Rod Casteel's Colonial Armnury of Eugene ,Oregon offers the largest selection of hand-made combat-grade weaponry available from a single source and he guarantees his work indefinitely.

MACBETH

This production was choreographed by David Leong with Thomas Schall as the Fight Captain.

This straightforward unspectacular production was played in a cave-like setting with a series of steps leading up about three and a half feet to a large playing area upstage left. The costumes were fairly standard medieval costumes with the only armor consisting of shoulder and arm-guards and an occasional vestigial breastplate. Dennis Graves has done some really stunning longswords, daggers and bastard swords. All the weapons were scabbarded, hopefully reversing the current thought amongst producers that somehow they are not needed.

After the first witches' scene, replete with the standard wind and light effect, we see an "excursion" depicting the retreat of Malcolm, Donalbain and their followers, bloodied and smeared with soot. The Wounded Sergeant rescues Malcolm from eminent capture and is wounded himself. The Sergeant fights with longsword (two handed) against an enemy armed with a long-handled axe, or perhaps it was a short-handled bill. Neither wears armor. This was a short fight of about eight or ten blows ending with the Sergeant stabbing his opponent in the stomach and giving an extra twist or two of the blade for good measure.

Banquo's death was also quick and dirty. The Murderers (including Fight Captain Tom Schall) were armed with particularly nasty looking 'Dennis Graves' "Roman" daggers. Banquo was disarmed immediately from behind by the Second Murderer with a cut to the inside of the wrist. Banquo closes in a face-to-face clinch with the First Murderer, so that we saw his dagger enter Banquo's

back. They fall to the floor, and the Second Murderer pulls Banquo up from behind as the First Murderer cuts his throat in full view. Curiously, the head wounds mentioned in the banquet scene were not shown. However, when Banquo's ghost appears, it has these wounds, as well as bleeding from the throat.

Young Macduff enters swinging Ross' sword and is armed with a child-sized dagger which he draws later to no effect. Ross takes his sword when he leaves, leaving mother and son essentially defenceless. The First Murderer viciously stabs Young Macduff in the back as he tries to escape on all fours. Lady Macduff was pursued offstage by the Second Murderer and her death-scream drew sniggers from the matinee audience.

Young Siward enters the battle-scene bellowing with battle-lust, which also drew laughter. As Macbeth, Christopher Plummer leisurely drew his dagger, and disdained his sword. He easily stopped Siward's head cut with his left hand and unseamed him from the "knave to the chops," contemptuously adding "thou wast born of woman."

Macbeth and Macduff encountered each other with suggestions of armor on shoulders and right arms, each with longsword and dagger. Macduff attacks on the upper stage left platform for three desultory two-hand blows, easily parried by Macbeth. They paused for "Thou lovest labor," though "...untimely ripped," while circling, with Macbeth on the upper platform and Macduff on the lower, drawing his dagger. Macbeth then crosses down to Macduff's level for "I will not yield..." They "lay on" for another eight or so blows, and Macduff parries high with his sword, stabbing Macbeth with his dagger, adding a twist for brutality. Macbeth appears fatally wounded, but suddenly recovers and chases Macduff offstage right. The entire exchange of blows lasted no more than thirty seconds or so.

There's an apocryphal story that the original Macbeth (Richard Burbage) refused to compromise his reputation as a swordsman by allowing himself to lose on stage, so the killing and beheading of Macbeth traditionally takes place offstage. Curiously, this production chose not to bring Macbeth's severed head on stage for Macduff's "Behold where stands the usurper's head," referring to it offstage instead.

In all, the fights were safe, short and serviceable, if disappointingly uncharacteristic of David's best work. It should be noted that the fights are expected to undergo drastic change under the new director Robin Phillips and that Plummer was obviously suffering from a knee injury at the matinee performance I attended.

Tony Soper

MACBETH AT THE FOLGER

On February 16, 1988, I had the pleasure of attending the opening night of *Macbeth* at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre in Washington D.C. The fights for this production were choreographed by David Leong.

The fights, as would be expected, were well choreographed and, for the most part, well performed. Rather than addressing the fights directly, I would like to address the attitude toward stage violence at the Folger Theatre. I grew up in Northern Virginia and have had the opportunity of seeing many Folger productions over the last fifteen years. This production marked a substantive change in the approach and actualization of stage violence at the Folger.

Since I began my training in stage combat with Joe Martinez in 1977, I have often been critical of the fights staged by the Folger. Many times the action was slow, at times seeming almost reserved. The choreography was repetitious and sometimes it appeared that, at most, the choreographer had analyzed the actions possible (given the constraints of the set), but had never analyzed the script or the characters in relation to the violence.

Macbeth, happily, did not seem to suffer from any of these prior problems. The killing of Banquo was accomplished with a severe cudgeling and a dagger across the throat. This was the first time that I had seen the use of blood to enhance belief on the Folger stage. The fight between the English and Scottish armies was performed with an appearance of reckless abandon that helped the audience to believe that these men really were fighting desperately to preserve their own lives and kill their enemies. The MacDuff-Macbeth fight, performed with broadsword, was the slowest portion of the choreography. At times, the characters exhaustion was overdone and there were holes in the fabric of the choreography, but with polishing this should disappear. The killing of Macbeth was accomplished graphically by hoisting him off the floor and having the sword and polearm points placed into the outer layer of clothing. Once again, the use of blood enhanced the overall effect.

All in all, I found in *Macbeth* a delightful and long overdue change. David's choreography and overall influence on the production is vivid and adds a dimension previously lacking in Folger productions. This production serves as a sterling example of how the Society is capable of influencing not only the professionalism of the combat, but the overall attitude towards violence as an integral part of the total theatre experience.

Robert P. Smith

BARBARIC HAMLET

The Hamlet-Laertes duel staged by Stewart Riley at the People's Light and Theatre Company in Malvern, Pennsylvania, was unusual and exciting. The production, set in a primitive world by Producing Director Danny Fruchter, was staged on a mound of packed dirt punctuated by several large boulders. Hamlet was played by the slender but agile Stephen Novelli. Danile Oreskes, an imposingly muscular and athletic actor, played Laertes.

In preparation for the duel, each actor stripped to the waist and put on a

circular metal chest target six inches in diameter. These targets were held in place by leather straps. The actors were tied together, left ankle to left ankle, by an inch-wide leather strap eight feet long. They wore leather half-masks that covered their foreheads, noses, and cheeks. Their leather gloves with padded forearms had exposed fingers. Osric held aloft two impressive hand-and-a-half broadswords by Rod Casteel as the actors prepared themselves. After Laertes' conditional acceptance of Hamlet's apology, the swords were pushed into the dirt on either side of the stage.

The duel began with ten inch daggers. Hamlet scored the first touch before the fight actually began. While shaking Laertes' hand with his right hand, Hamlet slapped Laertes' target with the dagger held in his left. Hamlet grinned mischievously.

The second bout was vigorously fought. The actors cut and evaded cuts. They tripped each other with the leather strap and rolled in the dirt. Hamlet scored clearly on Laertes' chest.

The actors fell and rolled again in bout three. Hamlet lost his dagger. He blocked a downward thrust of Laertes' dagger. In the grapple that followed, Hamlet was cut on the left tricep. No blood was used.

The dagger match was over and the fight began in deadly earnest when the actors ripped off their ankle strap and grabbed their broadswords. The actors used high and low wards. Daniel Oreskes demonstrated an extremely low and beautiful crouch. The blade work was done in close distance. Again the actors hit the dirt. Cuts evaded by rolls sank into the earth. Laertes disarmed Hamlet; then Hamlet disarmed Laertes. Both dove for Laertes' dagger. Laertes fell on his dagger in the ensuing scuffle.

When Hamlet turned on Claudius after Laertes explained the treachery involved, Claudius drew a sword from the twenty-four inch baton he carried. Claudius swung at Hamlet with the base of the baton and stabbed downward with

the sword. Hamlet evaded the swipe and blocked the sword with his left hand. Hamlet then stabbed Claudius twice, first with Claudius' back to Hamlet and again after turning Claudius around. Claudius retracted the dagger himself after the second stab.

This unusual fight was well choreographed. During both performances I attended, the fight was executed with aggression and control, although Hamlet rolled VERY close to one of the boulders. It held the audience's attention and suited the barbaric production that surrounded it.

Charles Conwell

A SPECTACULAR CORIOLANUS

David Leong's choreography for Liviu Ciulei's *Coriolanus*, starring Peter Francis James in Princeton, New Jersey, included the most spectacular piece of physical action I have ever seen in thirty seven years of theater. Twelve or more soldiers locked their rectangular shields above their heads creating a ramp to a second story arch upstage center. Coriolanus, starting from downstage center, sword in hand, ran up the shield ramp and engaged two soldiers inside as the doors of the arch closed behind him. After that run I believed that Coriolanus could subdue the city single-handed as the text demands he does. Minutes later, the center doors on the stage level burst open and Coriolanus appeared, driving some survivors of his carnage before him.

The battle was spectacular. There were at least forty combatants. The soldiers, dressed in World War Two coats and helmets, carried Roman shields and pilums. The battle began with the soldiers' helmets and pilum tips appearing from the trench-like orchestra pit. Officers used short swords either along or with shields. The physical skills of *Coriolanus* were appropriately highlighted throughout.

The single inconclusive fight between Coriolanus and Tullus Aufidius

that follows the battle should be climactic. It was not. It included a lot of shield bashing at the expense of blade work. David later told me that Ciulei changed this fight late in previews. It went into performance with only two hours rehearsal. I am sure that David would have done a better job if he had been given more time.

Despite my disappointment with the one fight, David's battle direction was impressive. He was assisted by Payson Burt.
Charles Conwell

MACBETH at the Folger

Two moments stand out in David Leong's climactic fight in the Folger Shakespeare Theatre's production of *Macbeth* directed by Michael Kahn.

In the middle of the fight Macduff is slammed into the stage left wall and falls face forward toward the audience. Macbeth kneels over Macduff and tells him: "I lead a charmed life and must not yield to one of woman born." As Macbeth rises and lifts his sword to kill Macduff, Macduff tells him that he "was from his mother's womb untimely ripped." The lights change dramatically and Macbeth's confidence is visibly shattered. This moment is well acted by Phillip Goodwin as Macbeth.

At the end of the fight, after Macduff stabs Macbeth, the fallen Macbeth is surrounded and stabbed by a crowd of men with swords and polearms. Two ropes drop from the flies and the corpse of Macbeth is raised six feet off the floor and stabbed again by the men with polearms. This startlingly effective tableau is held for an instant before the body is dropped and dragged off stage.

The fight itself with hand-and-a-half broadswords is characterized by short engagements, beautiful blade deflections and transfers, three hundred sixty degree turns, and wall slams. The wall slams make sense in the small Folger playing area.

The Macduff-Macbeth fight is prefaced with a battle in which groups of

two and three anonymous soldiers enter, engage, and exit either wounded, dying, or in flight. I would have preferred less of this, but there were two or three excellent kills on the periphery of the stage. The battle might have been more dramatically effective if Macbeth had killed a succession of soldiers instead of anonymous soldiers killing each other. I think it is critically important to keep the combat focus on the dramatic hero in Shakespeare.

The murder of the Macduff family was very imaginatively staged. A clothesline strung diagonally across the stage and hung with white sheets established a domestic situation. Macduff's son was drowned in a large wooden laundry tub and Lady Macduff was garroted by the clothesline pulled by two assailants. Her corpse hung from the line in a grim final tableau.

It seemed odd to me that no one carried a sword until the battle. The sword would have been worn daily in this early medieval period. Several times characters referred to the daggers they carried as "swords." This was distracting.

The production as a whole was well-directed. The set by Michael Yeagan was superb. With the exception of the bloody sergeant, Smaranda Branescu's costumes looked pristinely clean and distractingly stagy. Franchelle Stewart gave an outstanding performance as a passionate Lady Macbeth. David Leong's choreography provided a very exciting climax to this well-paced production. The final image of Macbeth's corpse hanging and punctured by polearms was unforgettable.

Charles Conwell

TWO BY WOOLLEY IN CHICAGO

By March 10th three shows involving fight direction by David Woolley had opened in Chicago. They

were **Macbeth** at the Court Theatre, **Vampires** at the Immediate Theatre and **The Royal Family** at The Body Politic Theatre.

George Kaufman and Edna Ferber's **The Royal Family** traces a year in the topsy-turvy lives of the Cavendish family, the "first family of the American Stage." The Body Politic Theatre's set on a thrust stage with oriental rugs, antique furniture and chandeliers on its low ceiling created an elegant and intimate environment for the performance. Up center was a short flight of stairs that led to a landing that went off left.

At the top of the second act the newly returned Hollywood swashbuckler, Tony Cavendish, is having a fencing workout all over the house with his sister's boxing instructor. The engagement of blades and the crashing of objects is heard off stage before the two combatants enter on the landing up left and work their way down the short flight of steps. In keeping with the swashbuckling tradition, Woolley has the pair doing the traditional Errol Flynn combination of head cut, parry seconde, parry prime, head cut along with the "J.R. foot whip." The house staff, which was always in a frenzy, kept walking obliviously in and out of the fight. This could have been a marvelously funny piece of stage business if the the pace and timing had been better and if the actors had done something more than just go through their moves.

Woolley had incorporated some jabbing like boxing moves in the fencing match for the trainer McDermott which were done very poorly. Unfortunately, a poorly coordinated actor had been cast as the trainer.

The low ceilings at the theatre caused the swashbuckling hero to run into the chandelier. Apparently this was a regular occurrence during the run of the show.

Harry Kondoleon's **Vampires** at the Immediate Theatre was in another small equity house with thrust staging.

This play involves realistic contemporary violence in a rather campy production of families going ethrough career changes and mid-life crisis. The small space was filled with a couch, two chairs, a small bar, end table, a coffin and an artsy flight of stairs. Yet David Woolley was able to stage many believable punches, shoves, hair pulls, head bashes and a roll on the floor in this confined space. Most of the technique was well masked. However, as is inevitable on a thrust stage, some technique showed on occasion.

The first piece of violence was Ed dragging his drug-crazed thirteen year old daughter, Zivia, around the room by the hair. Actress Yvonne Suhor's reactions were superb in this highly believable sequence. Unfortunately, her super-human strength at the end of the play did not work. Even though this "waif's" simple punch could send her Uncle Ian across the room and over a couch, this reaction seemed too big for the action; the audience had not been introduced to Zivia's super strength. This could have been set up by her aunt and parent's reaction to her hugs in the earlier hugging sequence. Or perhaps some sound reinforcement with a loud knap or some sound effect might have communicated to the audience the extraordinary nature of her gently executed punches.

When the whole family momentarily came together to pommel Zivia's husband, the actor's reactions to the pommelling were so vague they were practically non-existent. The family seemed to rush through this sequence and perhaps this was the best choice rather than to have to watch an actor react poorly to the punches.

There were some wonderfully unexpected surprises in this production which were so well timed and executed that they caught one totally off guard--- the head bashing on the stairs, with blood, the foot stomp, and the head smash with the popcorn bowl.

David Woolley is working in a variety of small theatre spaces in the Chicago area and has dealt extremely well with the restricted spaces and difficult

sight lines of these spaces. It would be nice to see what this talented young choreographer could do in a large space with a body of trained actor/combatants.

Linda McCollum

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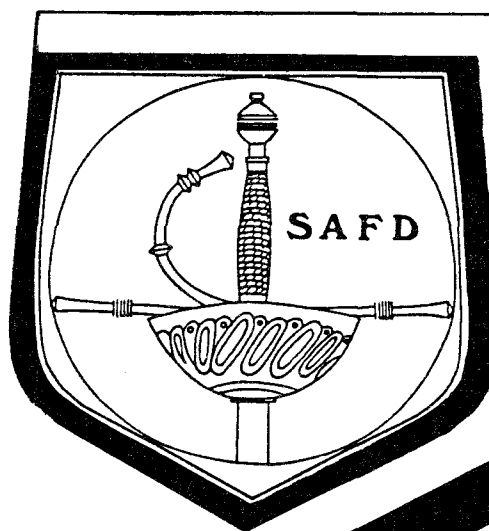
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Congratulations to Rick Sordelet for his favorable mention by reviewer Mel Gussow in the *New York Times* on February 9, 1988. "The play and musical 'ditties' by Douglas J. Cohen are a tasteless melange, but Rick Sordelet, as fight director, has staged a neat sibling duel with knives."

I'd like to respond to Charles Conwell's comments in the May 1987 issue of *The Fight Master*. I endorse his call to encourage all actors interested in stage combat to study competitive fencing. As he says:

It puts the actor in "kinetic and imaginative touch with the evolution of fencing.

It "teaches the necessity of protecting the sword arm."

It highlights the "similarity between the competitive spirit and the simulated aggression necessary to a good stage fight."

It develops the "hand-eye coordination necessary to place the point exactly where...it should go."

This is to say nothing of the health benefits of participating in such a vigorous physical sport. And we shouldn't minimize the tangible benefits to be gained from a sport demanding simultaneous total engagement of both body and intellect..

By the way of added encouragement to combatants I offer the following thoughts from two outstanding professionals:

Olympia Dukakis, currently in Norman Jewison's *Moonstruck*, and New England Fencing champion when she attended Boston University says in the February 1988 issue of *Preview*, "In

fencing, you have to have good reflexes and strategies...You have to be very quick and totally in the moment, totally committed. That's why it was once part of every actor's training. Fencing gave me a physical daring with my body. I have it even now, when I'm too old to be daring with my body," she adds with a shrug.

And Eve La Gallienne in *A Quiet Heart* has this to say:

"I've always thought fencing one of the most stimulating and fascinating forms of exercise. It's never dull, because one's mind is kept just as busy as one's body, and I think that is why it is so good for actors; it develops that precise coordination between thought and action that is such a necessary part of playing...Without thought there is no reason for movement. The movement is a direct result of a specific intention; the recreation of this intention demands complete concentration, and complete concentration eliminates self-consciousness."

I challenge the rest of the membership to share their thoughts on the benefits and/or drawbacks of fencing for the actor, and to share inspirational material.

Mark Olsen's article on "The Metaphysics of Stage Combat" in the January 1988 issue of *The Fight Master* was thought-provoking and original. I look forward to members' reactions, especially the Fight Masters' thoughts on the "spiritual" side of the art.

Finally, I would like to respond to David Boushey's comments in his letter "Reviewing the Reviewer" the January issue.

I applaud David's sharing his views in the public forum of the journal, so that all readers might benefit from his insights and explanations. It's my view that when reviewing for *The Fight Master*, we should report the lessons we learn from watching another choreographer's solutions to difficult combat problems. In this way we can all

learn from both the triumphs and failures of our colleagues. For example, Linda McCollum's reviews are exemplary in this respect, not only giving her subjective reactions to the fight work, but also detailing some aspects of the set design, costuming, acting style and other elements effecting the choreographer's task.

David takes exception to my observation that some of the melee scenes in **The Three Musketeers** were overcrowded, noting that he was working with a largely inexperienced cast on a too small stage. David points out he "cannot do the fights for the actors nor can he be there at every performance to keep them in line." My intention was to suggest that perhaps another solution to this problem might have been to either reduce the number of fighters on the cramped stage, or, to stagger their fights much in the way he had successfully done earlier in the same theater's production of **Robin Hood**.

David "expects members of the Society to know certain aspects of the fight game that regular reviewers don't know," and points out that he "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)." My observations confirmed that he largely succeeded in his intention. However, my comments arose not from "assumptions about [his] work that are not totally correct," as David suggests in his letter, but from respectful disagreement with his approach to solving that problem.

David misinterprets a comment I made about D'Artagnan's kill move. David claims I described the move incorrectly. The difficulty of accurately notating a fight after one viewing only is self-evident. However, the misunderstanding arises from the fact that the move I described occurs in the movie **Conan The Barbarian**, which I noticed had been 'stolen' from numerous earlier chambarra movies. I wasn't suggesting that David had stolen his move (described very thoroughly in his letter) from **Conan**, though as David

says, he "stole this move some fifteen years ago from my mentor who stole it from his." Rather I thought David quite cleverly "translated" a move from an Asian weapon to a western style, and I was using the movie as a point of reference. In other words, if you didn't get to see the play, you could see the movie and get a close idea of what David's kill move looked like.

Members should note that David gave us carte blanche to steal this move after describing it. Can a choreographer "copyright" a move? For example, David's trademark parry-left/back-pivot-in/elbow-stomach? What do you think?

Tony Soper



POINTS OF INTEREST

On December 15th, in New York City, I tested the students of Ralph Anderson. Though there were only five students, there was a nice turn out to see the fights in a large studio on lower Broadway. Mr. Anderson's teaching is good, but I believe that he needed more time with some of the students. The two failures were near misses, and they should be encouraged to continue to work further.

David Lough
Rec: Unarmed
Passed: Rapier & Dagger
Quarterstaff

Nicolas Sandys
Rec. Rapier & Dagger
Passed: Unarmed
Quarterstaff

Robert Tuftee
Passed: Unarmed
Rapier & Dagger
Quarterstaff

Instructor: Ralph Anderson
Adjudicator: Allen Suddeth

WEBSTER COLLEGE

In mid December I had the pleasure of travelling to St. Louis to adjudicate the students of Bob Goodwin at Webster College. After braving the cold and ice I was treated to a most interesting evening of certification scenes. Six students passed the test with two very solid recommendations. The students tested in unarmed, quarterstaff, and rapier and dagger. The rapier and dagger choreography contained an interesting section of courtsword work which proved a very nice way to prove their further competence with the point. The

recommended fighters proved soundly that practice makes perfect, with one of the gentlemen doing superior work with stitches in his swordhand from an unrelated accident a few days earlier. Three cheers for perseverance! Those students passing were:

Recommended:
Randy Donaldson
Larry Michelson

Passed:
Valarie Fueller
Janie Jordan
Marie Carr-Oxley
Mary Chaisson

Instructor: Bob Goodwin
Ajudicator: Drew Fracher

COLUMBIA COLLEGE

On January 23 I went to Chicago to test what is, I believe, the first certified class that was taught by one our new Certified Teachers. These were David Woolley's students from Columbia College in Chicago. They were trained in unarmed, rapier and dagger, courtsword and broadsword. Most students tested on three weapons, with one group testing and faring quite well in all four. Seven students passed which speaks well for Mr. Woolley; my congratuatlions to him. Of particular interest was a scene called "Blade Aid" done by Lisa Blumberg and Allison Halstead. Allison stands just a few inches over four feet tall and Lisa is probably five feet nine inches or so. Here a potential nightmare of distance was turned into an amazing piece of fight work and partnering. There was never a problem with distance or high points. The ladies compensated for all difficulties with a great deal of ZA! Allison leapt into the air to perform a successful head slash and Lisa practically picked her up and flung her into the wall for a head smash. It was truly amazing and an inspiration to all of us who continually fight the problems of distance and fighting measure. I wish every member could have seen these ladies perform. There were many lessons being very clearly

taught in those seven minutes. Congratulations to David Woolley and each of his students.

The following students passed the certification test:

Laura Walsh Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Broadsword

Catherine D'Astice Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Broadsword

Chuck Townsend Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Courtsword

Lisa Blumberg Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Broadsword

Allison Halstead Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Broadsword

Randy Meyer Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Broadsword
 Courtsword

Eric Fichtner Unarmed
 Rapier and
 Dagger
 Broadsword
 Courtsword

Instructor: David Woolley
Adjudicator: Drew Fracher

the six students testing, I am pleased to say that all of them passed.

As in the case of other "first time teachers" of certification tests, Payson's fights were exceptionally long. In each fight almost fifty percent of the choreography could have been omitted while retaining the necessary moves to satisfy the Society's minimum requirements. Additionally, the scenes were too long, thus surpassing the maximum seven minutes allowed for the total scene. Regardless of these factors, Payson's choreography was satisfactory with especially inventive moves on the quarterstaff. A sequence of avoidances, cuts and thrusts while moving in a circle was definitely one of the most exciting I've seen in a while.

I believe the students testing were better actors than I saw that day. The one dimensional characters played in their scenes coupled with weak scriptwriting prevented any of them from receiving recommendations. With a good solid character and a bit more polish, two or three students could be close to recommended status.

Listed below are the students who received their certification in rapier and dagger, unarmed and quarterstaff.

James Myers
Lee Hustedt
Bob Parsons
Sharon Dane
Jeff Holbrook
Dan Olmstead

Instructor: Payson Burt
Adjudicator: David Leong

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

On April 15th I travelled to Philadelphia to adjudicate students of Payson Burt's at Temple University. Of

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Paul B. Anderson did thirty performances of Richard Nelson's **Principia Scriptoriae** at the City Theatre Company of Oakland outside of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Gary Bradford again performed the joust at the New York Renaissance Festival last summer, which he choreographed along with the fight scene from **Henry IV** in which he played Hotspur. He also choreographed their equity production of **Macbeth**. Last fall, Gary returned to St. Petersburg, Florida to choreograph the American Stage's production of **A Comedy of Errors**. Gary is currently in the Broadway production of **Macbeth** with Christopher Plummer and Glenda Jackson, playing a soldier, murderer and the first apparition.

David Boushey is acting as stunt coordinator for an independent film being shot in Seattle titled **DareDreamers**. He will be doing a master class at Bradley University in Illinois. He recently completed work on **Hogan's Goat** for the Seattle Repertory Theatre.

Rod Casteel in recent months has produced weaponry for **Coriolanus** at the McCarter Theatre, **Shogun Macbeth** at the Pan-Asian Repertory Theatre, three productions of **Rashomon** at the Roundabout Theatre, Drexel University and Lycoming College, **Peter Pan** at the Longwood College and Drexel University and **Macbeth** at the Court Theatre. The Empty Space Theatre in Seattle made effective use of Rod's recent articles in **The Fight Master** on how to make swordbelts and scabbards for their production of **Scaramouche**; and Rod continues to build personal weapons for SAFD/SCFD members like Allen Suddeth, Richard Raether, Rick Sordeltet, Bruce Lecuru, Braun McAsh, Paddy Crean and David Boushey. Rod's new and updated 1988 catalog of hand-

made weaponry is about thirty percent larger than before and he now offers the first combat-worthy Japanese swords, military sabers and cutlasses. Currently in the works are a true "L'eepee du Soldat" blade, wider than the "musketeer" blade, yet competitively priced.

Charles Coyl was fight captain and taught a certification class at the outdoor drama, **Viking** last summer in Minnesota. Charles is currently choreographing the violence in a production of **Vinegar Tom** for the Trinity Square Ensemble in Chicago.

Steven Edwards was recently seen kicking a fellow SAFD and FRU member through a saloon window and taking two more out with a single bottle of whiskey on **One Life to Live**. Earlier in the year, Steven choreographed the stunts for the theatre benefit at St. Barts in Manhattan. Among the presentations was Edwards' original **Monday Night Playbill: Miss Julie**, Strindberg's classic--as seen through the eyes of the NFL. Steven is currently co-starring in a new Off-Broadway play **A Circle on the Cross** which was awarded the New York Drama League's "Best Play of 1987" award. Mr. Edwards is also the fight/stunt choreographer for this award-winning play. This summer Steven will be giving a fight workshop and acting seminar at the University of Arkansas. He will also direct **The Best Little Whorehouse in Texas** in Nashville.

Robert Goodwin this season choreographed **Company** (the karate scene at the top of Act I) for the Repertory Theatre of St. Louis, **Extremities** for the University of Missouri-St. Louis, **The Trojan Women** for Webster University and a seven woman "cat" fight for Southern Illinois University's production of **Guys and Dolls**.

Mark (Rat) Guinn choreographed **Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead** with Susan Chrietzberg for Memphis State's Main Stage. Mark also did **Romeo and Juliet** at the Playhouse on the Square,

the fights for **Gilgamesh** and put together a duel for the Dance show.

Dr. Robin McFarquhar choreographed productions of **The Beaux Stratagem** and **Confetti** for the Illinois Repertory Theatre, a production of **Henry V** set in the second World War for the Virginia Shakespeare Festival with the battle of Agincourt being performed with lances, pick--axe handles, digging shovels and chains, and a **Macbeth** for the Idaho Shakespeare Festival. He also taught workshops for Western Illinois University and Boise State University. In addition, he studied movement therapy techniques at the Institute for Educational Therapy in Switzerland for a month. The highlight of the year, however, was going home to England for Christmas and having the honor of spending an afternoon with William Hobbs at the Royal Opera House where Hobbs was choreographing a production of **Othello** with Placido Domingo. Robin continues to teach movement at the University of Illinois.

Richard Raether assisted David Leong on **Rashomon** at the Roundabout and then went to work on a new play at the Westbeth Theater entitled **Isolate**. In March he staged the fights for **Romeo and Juliet** at the New American Theater. Brian Byrnes will be his fight captain on the production as well as play Sampson.

Ian Rose choreographed the fights for and appeared in Manhattan Stage Company's production of **As You Like It** at the Judith Anderson Theatre on Theatre Row in Manhattan. He is presently working on a second showcase with **Steel**, his fight company, called **Fighting Shakespeare**. In the spring he will be choreographing the fights for Manhattan Stage's production of **Henry IV Part I**.

Robert Scranton is currently choreographing the fight scenes for the University of Arkansas at Little Rock's production of **Man of La Mancha** and also is the fight director for the authorized theatrical debut of **Lord of the Flies**, presented by the Arkansas Childrens

Theatre in Little Rock. This semester Robert taught an Honors & Scholars course at UALR called "Society and the Sword," which traces the use and development of the blade from ancient to modern times, allowing the students hands-on experience with the basics of many weapons. Robert has incorporated some **Fight Master** articles for academic use by the students and these have proved invaluable.

Tony Soper was in Baltimore in Clifford Odet's **Paradise Lost** which included a few incidental scenes of open-hand violence choreographed by Armand Schultz. His new television series **Hothouse** is on ABC.

Ellyn Stein wrote and directed Festival Fairytales at the New York Renaissance Festival last summer.

Ann Tsuji has been doing A Christmas Carol at the McCarter Theatre last winter, **Much Ado About Nothing** in Cleveland and **Madame de Sade** at the Pan Asian Repertory in New York.

Patrick Vala-Haynes received the 1987 Willamette Week Award for Excellence in Theatre for his fight direction in the New Rose production of **Romeo and Juliet**. He was the fight director for **Rashomon** at Pacific University and most recently completed work on David Mamet's **The Woods** for New Rose Theatre in Portland.



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