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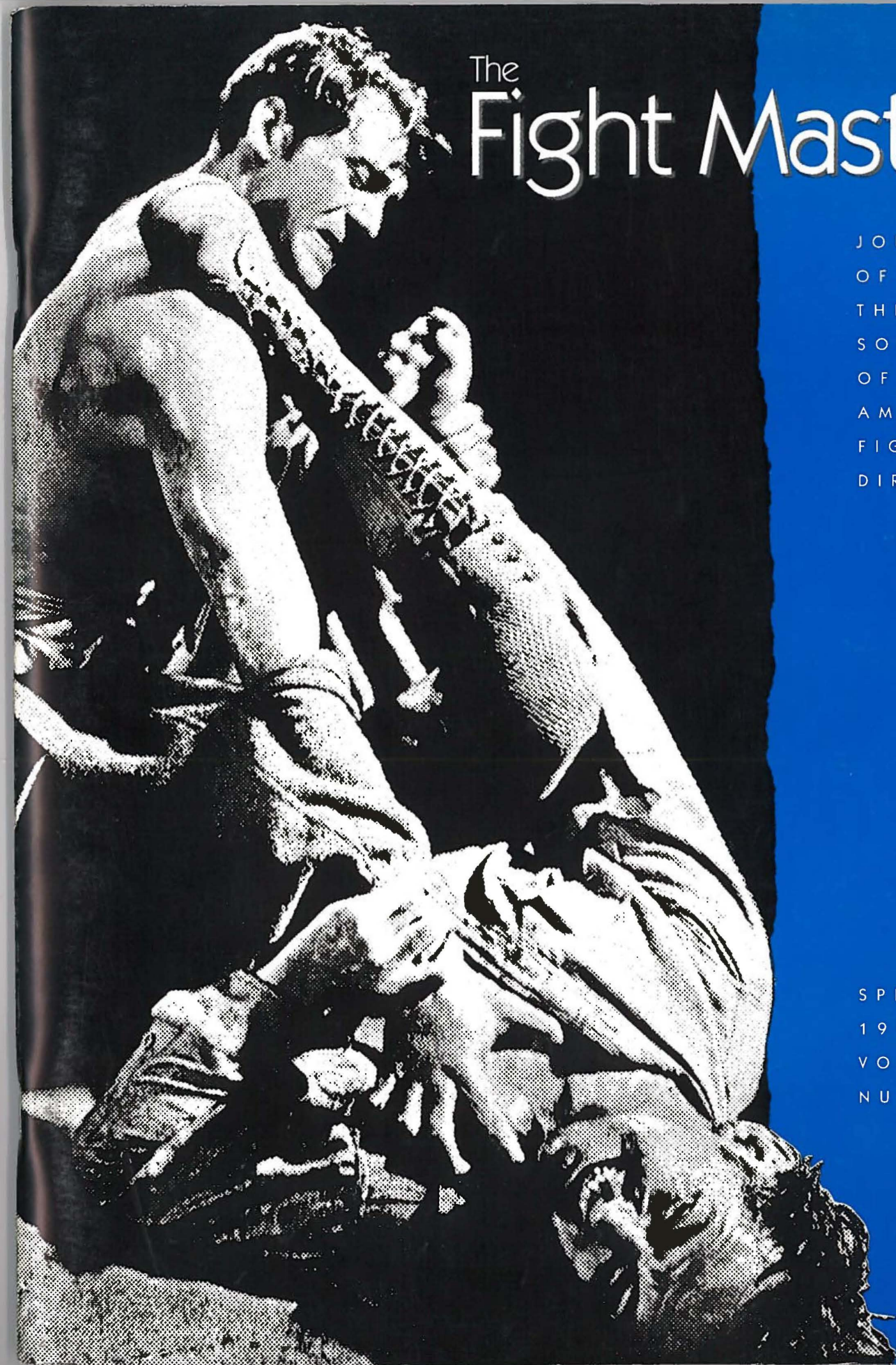
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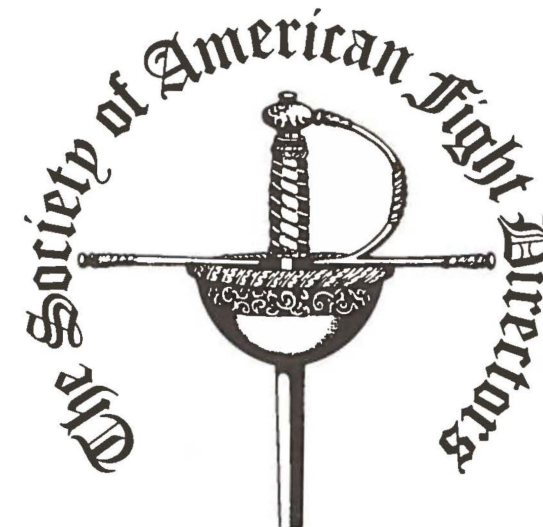
The Fight Master

JOURNAL
OF
THE
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OF
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DIRECTORS

SPRING
1991
VOLUME XIV
NUMBER 1

The Fight Master

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dedicated to the art of stage combat.



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The Fight Master

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WORKING WITH AMATEURS: STAGE COMBAT SAFETY FOR UNTRAINED FIGHTERS

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BY DREW FRACHER

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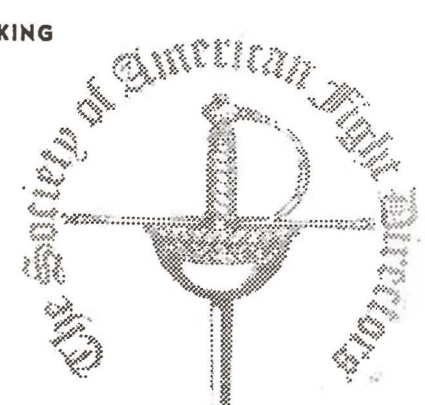
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Richard Raether
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the art of
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about
the Cover

Cover Art
by
Duane Orlemann

Cover art for this issue of the *Fight Master* is based on a great western fist-fight from the 1930 film *The Spoilers* starring Gary Cooper and William Boyd.

The artist is Duane Orlemann, an SAFD member, certified actor/combatant, and, happily for the SAFD, a professional graphic artist.

Duane can be contacted at:
513-961-6400

Dennis L. Graves
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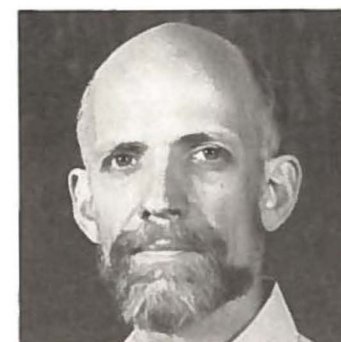
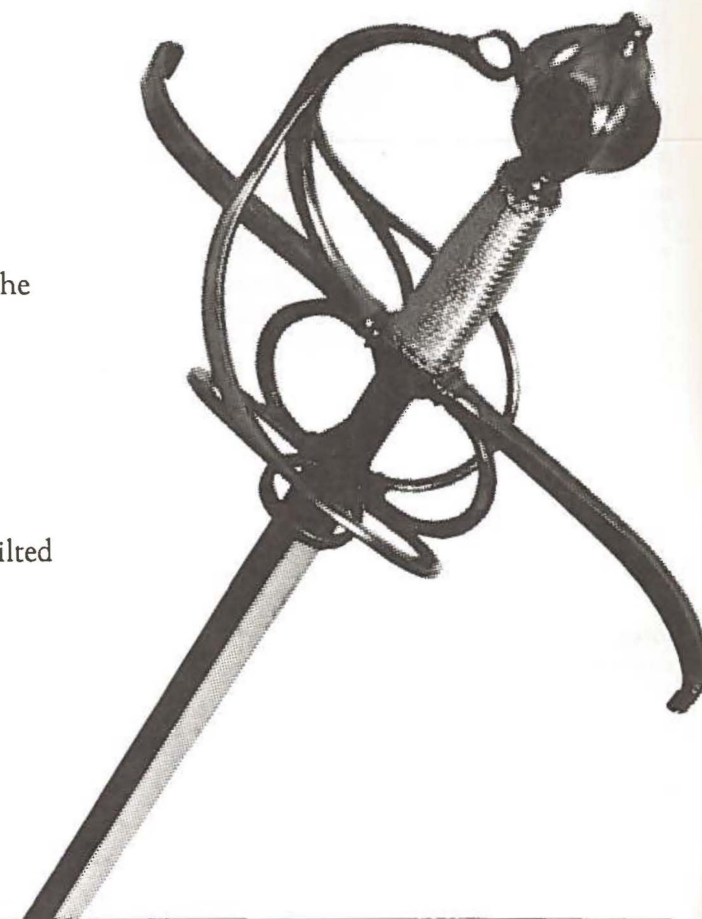
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J. ALLEN SUDDETH
SAFD PRESIDENT

from the
President

SPRING IS ON ITS WAY, AND WITH IT, THE EVER-INCREASING VOLUME OF CERTIFICATION FIGHT TESTS. TO THOSE PURSUING THAT GOAL, I SEND

you my good luck! I remember well waiting nervously in the wings at the Juilliard School, to present my test fight to Mr. Patrick Crean. That was more years ago than I wish to remember, and somewhat before the SAFD was adjudicating here in the United States.

There was a time, fair friends, that only the British Society tested here in the USA. However, that all changed in the early 1980s, when the SAFD began to hold tests in a few cities across the country, and the Society of British Fight Directors (SBFD) decided to test only in the United Kingdom—a bit of history for those of you new to the Society.

SAFD History

I am often asked, "How did you guys get started?" It's a long story, but to that end Richard Raether, with help from Founder David Boushey, and original members Joseph Martinez and Erik Fredricksen, is preparing a history of the Society of American Fight Directors for publication in the *Fight Master*.

1991 NSCW

Soon, we will be gathering in Las Vegas for the twelfth annual National Stage Combat Workshop (NSCW). This year I am very excited to announce that students attending the Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop (AACW) will have the opportunity to train with, and certify in, broadsword and shield. They will be, perhaps, among the first in the country to do so.

The Society is on the verge of a major new equipment purchase, and is committed to offering this discipline at both this year's AACW and next year's Advanced Teacher Training Program.

ATHE Convention in Seattle

At the conclusion of the NSCW in August, several of the officers and board members will be traveling to Seattle, Washington, for the ATHE (Association Theater in Higher Education) Convention. We will be representing the SAFD to the academic community at large. We will be joined for a panel entitled, "The Sounds of Violence" by Bonnie Raphael, distinguished voice and speech instructor, and member of VASTA. Ms. Raphael was a guest artist at a previous NSCW, and works at A.R.T. in Boston.

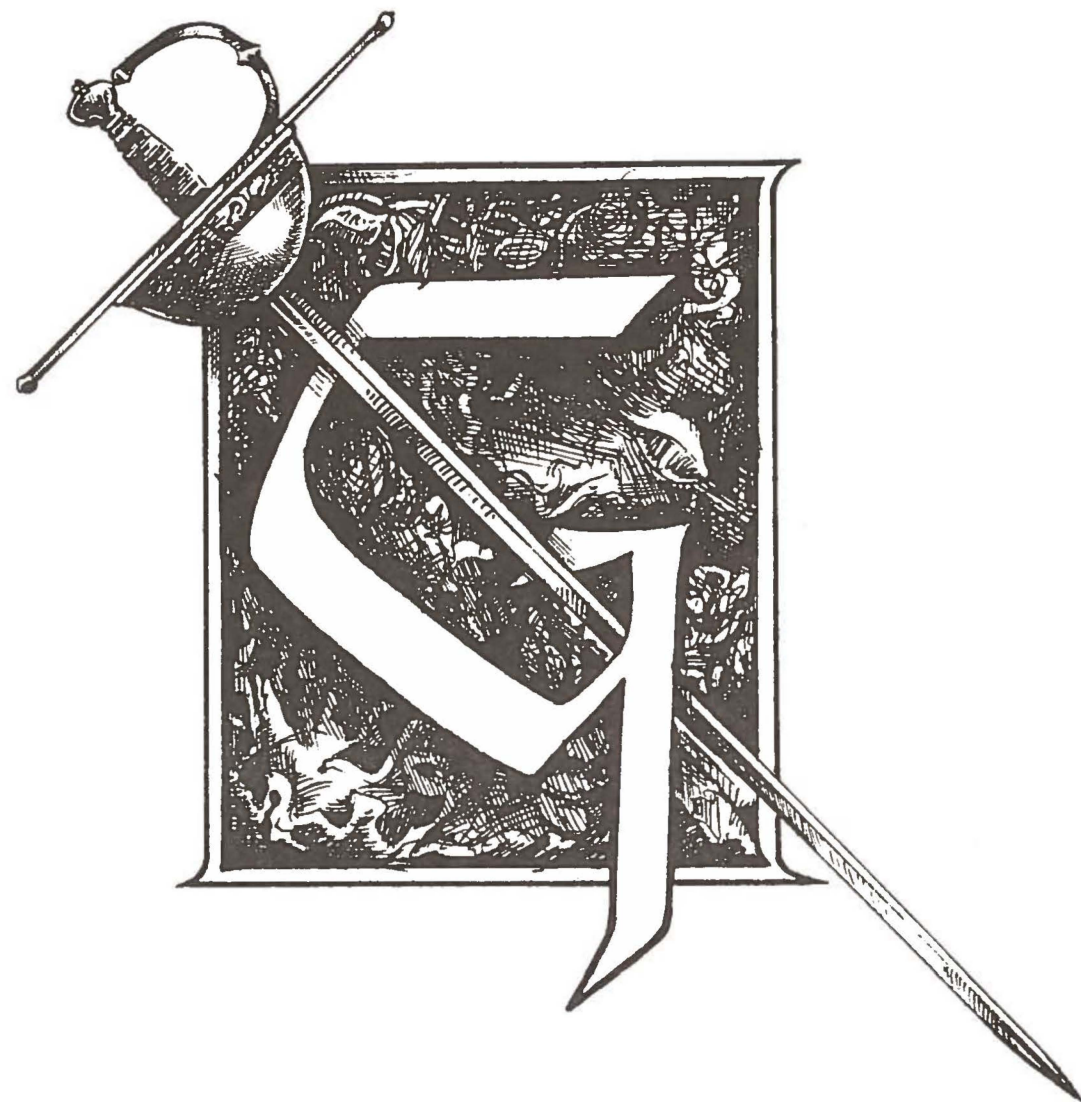
Scholarships

Finally, many of you have called me, and expressed interest in the SAFD scholarship program. When I announced this new program in the last issue of the *Fight Master*, I mentioned that this was something the board of directors was exploring. Regrettably, it is not yet funded, nor in place. When it is, there will be an announcement in the *Cutting Edge*, or the *Fight Master*.

Keep In Mind

Finally, I wish you all a successful summer season. Let's keep those standards high out there in the Shakespeare festivals, outdoor dramas, renaissance faires, regional theatres, and summer stock theatres all across the country. Remember, SAFETY (SAFD) FIRST!

J. Allen Suddeth



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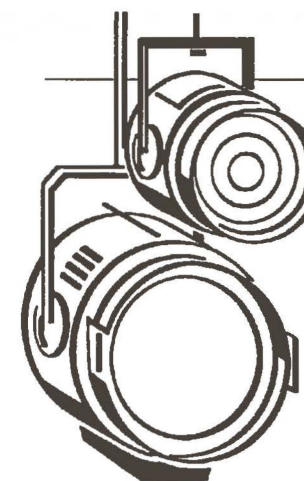
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Spotlight

on fight master
Richard Raether

A BROKEN NOSE LED THIS FIGHT MASTER TO SIGN UP FOR CLASSES IN STAGE COMBAT.

"The play was *Picnic*. It was opening night and the adrenaline was pumping. I played Hal and in the last act I had a small scuffle with the actor playing Alan. As I forced him down into the dirt, he suddenly threw his head back and caught me on the bridge of the nose. I saw stars, both eyes began turning black and I started dripping blood from both nostrils. My only coherent thought was, 'I've got a big love scene with Madge before I can get offstage and if I get blood on her costume, the designer will kill me!'"

He made it through to the end of the play, ran offstage long enough to stuff toilet paper up his nose so he could take his curtain call, then headed for the local emergency room. "Somewhere along the way, it crossed my mind that there must be a better way," laughs fight master Richard Raether.

That was summer stock in 1980. Upon returning to New York, Richard began investigating fencing classes. "I had a lot of physical training in my background, some dance, and I'd studied mime pretty extensively with Claude Kipnis. That train of thought begun in *Picnic* led me to the conclusion that maybe some fight classes would be a good, saleable skill to add to my acting resumé." An ad in *Backstage* for stage combat classes with fight master J. Allen Suddeth led to a nine-year association. "I got bit," Richard recalls, "and bad. There were periods during the first couple of years when I was fighting six days a week."

Suddeth's master class evolved into a performance group, Fights R Us, which kept Raether busy wielding a sword in regular appearances at the Westbeth Theatre Center. "Besides the fun I was having, I still saw my

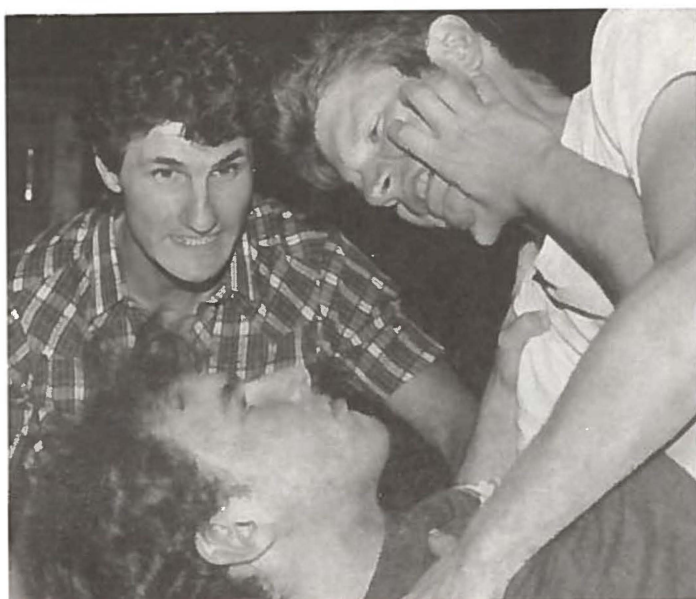
involvement as a part of my acting career. I was hoping the skills I'd learned would lead me to some of the roles I wanted to play."

The payoff finally came when Richard was cast as D'artagnan in the Dallas Theater Center's production of *The Three Musketeers* (pictured above). The choreographer was David L. Boushey. "It was the first time I appreciated the practical advantages of SAFD membership. David and I had never met, but he pulled for me during casting, on the strength of my training. Fortunately for me, I had just certified and recommended with Erik



Spotlight

on Richard Raether



Two actors rehearse a hand-to-hand struggle under the watchful eye of choreographer Richard Raether.

Fredricksen adjudicating. I had read for the *Musketeers* director. He told me who was choreographing and I wrote to Boushey hoping he might need an extra cardinal's guard. When I got the call from Dallas offering me the lead—well, most of the time an actor's life is such a pit—it was great to savor a moment where everything turns out right."

Over the years, Richard continued working with Allen and finding that, more and more, he was making his living through stage combat, doing stunts on the soaps, jousting with Steve Vaughan at the New York Renaissance Faire, and choreographing more and more. By the late '80s, Allen and Richard were partners in A.C.T.S., Actors Combat Training School, and Richard had succeeded Allen as the president of Fights R Us.

"I assisted Joe Martinez at the 1987 National Stage Combat Workshop in Memphis and certified as a teacher while I was there. At the NSCW I realized that most people are able to study with a fight master for only three-and-a-half weeks out of the year. I had been lucky enough to work just about non-stop with Allen for years."

Back in New York, Richard began to seriously pursue his certification as a fight master, assisting David Leong with *Rashomon* at the Roundabout Theatre, continuing his work with Suddeth and choreographing for plays and soaps. "I'll always love acting, but my professional theatrical ambitions had changed direction."

Raether became a certified fight master in 1988. "The SAFD hadn't been certifying teachers long, so I guess I was the first fight master to pass through all

three levels: actor/combatant, teacher and fight master."

In 1989, Richard and his wife Margaret heard the Midwest calling them home. "We packed up the kids, the Macintosh and all our belongings and hit the road. Allen and his wife Grace threw us a memorable going-away party, and we had some real pangs about leaving. Fortunately, as secretary and treasurer for SAFD, I get to keep in touch with everyone, even if it's just to holler about dues."

These days, based in hometown Rockford, Illinois, Richard divides his time between teaching in the professional training program at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee and choreographing at regional theatres. He serves as SAFD secretary, treasurer and associate editor for the *Cutting Edge* and the *Fight Master*. He's still acting, but only if the job offer doesn't take him too far from home and family. "My seven-year-old daughter just won an award for a project on Knights in Armor—the judges were amazed at how much a sweet little girl knew about weaponry. But my three-year-old boy likes G.I. Joe best."

They say good can come from evil. Maybe it's true. Certainly for fight master Richard Raether, a broken nose led to a new career.

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WORKING WITH AMATEURS: STAGE COMBAT SAFETY FOR UNTRAINED FIGHTERS

Less is more when choreographing youthful and over-eager actors. A fight master's guidelines for success.

BY
J. ALLEN SUDDETH

Many plays involving fight scenes are performed in grade schools, high schools, amateur, and community theatres. Plays such as *Romeo and Juliet*, *Peter Pan*, and *Treasure Island* are always popular; I've even seen Shakespeare's history plays produced at this level.

While maintaining safety margins for these types of productions is a priority, it is a given that few, or none, of the performers are trained in stage combat or weapons use. However, very effective combat scenes can be staged safely, and still do justice to each individual play.

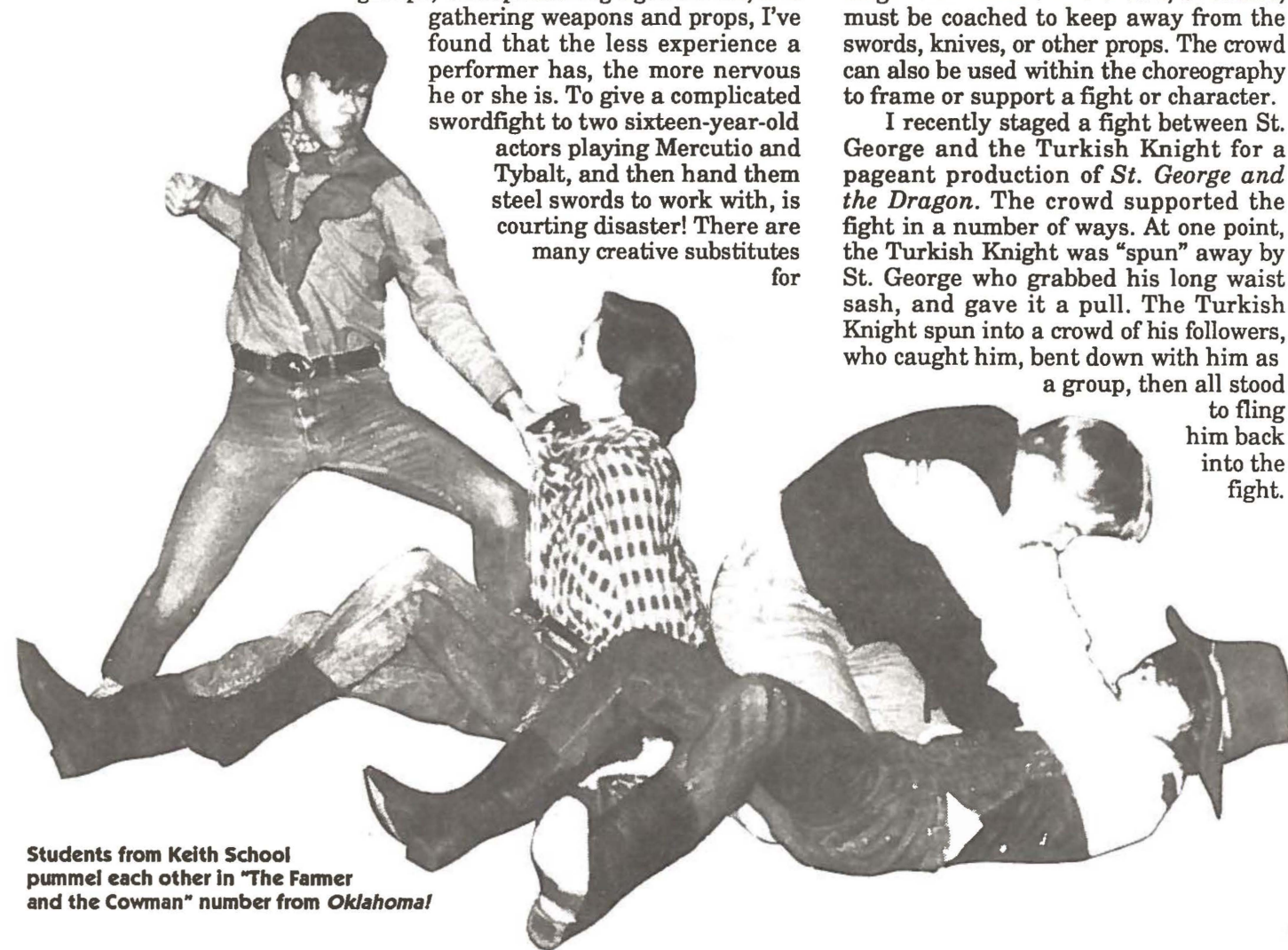
When preparing to work with these groups, conceptualizing fight scenes, and gathering weapons and props, I've found that the less experience a performer has, the more nervous he or she is. To give a complicated swordfight to two sixteen-year-old actors playing Mercutio and Tybalt, and then hand them steel swords to work with, is courting disaster! There are many creative substitutes for

dangerous props, and many approaches to safe choreography.

Even something as simple as a slap or a knife wound, as in the musical *Carousel*, can be dangerous and should be looked at early on in the rehearsal process. As cast size in school or community productions is usually large, effective use can be made of mass movement of bodies.

For instance, fight scenes in *Romeo and Juliet* can be surrounded by pulsing, undulating, circulating masses of bodies downstage of the main action, thereby hiding the fight a bit while filling the stage with action. The crowd, of course, must be coached to keep away from the swords, knives, or other props. The crowd can also be used within the choreography to frame or support a fight or character.

I recently staged a fight between St. George and the Turkish Knight for a pageant production of *St. George and the Dragon*. The crowd supported the fight in a number of ways. At one point, the Turkish Knight was "spun" away by St. George who grabbed his long waist sash, and gave it a pull. The Turkish Knight spun into a crowd of his followers, who caught him, bent down with him as a group, then all stood to fling him back into the fight.



Students from Keith School pummel each other in "The Farmer and the Cowman" number from *Oklahoma!*

As the two main characters came together center stage, they locked their (wooden) swords up high, while the crowd made two circles around them, chanting and moving in opposite directions. Finally, the climax of the fight came as the crowd lifted St. George high over their heads, and he was "stabbed" from below. The crowd then slowly lowered St. George to the floor in a "Pietà" pose, giving a group moan.

This is an example of safe use of the stage, group involvement, dramatic picture, and effective storytelling with complete safety for all concerned. The two characters never "sword fight" in the traditional sense. Their blades never connected. No cuts or thrusts were used, leaving the audience to use their imagination.

In this same vein, chase scenes are usually pretty safe, if they don't involve too many gymnastics, or running on slippery surfaces. The same rule would apply to multilevel sets, or steep stairs, or chase scenes through the audience. These can be very effective, but must be worked out thoroughly ahead of time, to prevent, and minimize risk of injury.

Exciting action can be suggested with a good (and safe) chase scene. A good deal of comedy can also be found in chases utilizing doors, windows, group reactions, and a surprise or two.

A word about weapons is in order whenever one is talking about young

performers or amateur/community theatre. I always hesitate to hand over a metal sword, knife, or other heavy realistic prop, such as a pipe or club, and would *never* consider using firearms in this situation.

Much can be achieved without difficult, complicated choreography, and without using "real" weapons.

There is nothing wrong with giving inexperienced performers plastic, rubber, or well-made wooden swords, knives, and other props of destruction.

I would never use a real metal knife to stab Bernardo in *West Side Story* in a high school production, and I would even think twice about university-level actors. By the same

guideline, I would not hand a young actor playing Peter Pan a heavy cutlass to fight Captain Hook, but instead use a lightweight, well-built wooden or plastic mock-up of a sword.

This kind of thinking serves two masters: one, fights are safer; two, it usually encourages "non-realistic" fighting, which is inherently safer than realistic choreography. Hollywood has long known to give out rubber, wood, and plastic to extras in huge battle scenes. It is asking for trouble to give three hundred extras storming the gates of the castle, real steel. Sound effects are added later, in the editing room, to enhance the effect of the battle.

This same technique can be used on the stage to give added depth to large battles or to suggest fights offstage. A sound tape made with the cast hitting pots and pans or sticks, yelling and screaming, perhaps overlaid with drums and horns will give the effect of a huge *melée*, and will be a lot of fun for the cast!

If young and/or inexperienced actors must perform a battle scene on stage, rather than off, do realize that they can be hurt by wooden swords as well, and keep any choreography to a minimum. Repetitive strokes are best here, as they are easily remembered, and when done on different parts of the stage, look different. Patterns such as:

high, low, high, low
or

right shoulder, left shoulder,
right shoulder, left shoulder

are easy enough for all to remember. The younger the performer, the easier the pattern should be.

At the same time, the more inexperienced the performer, the wider the parries, or defensive moves. Straight arm parries are the thing to use here, to keep the maximum margin of safety. Even simple moves like ducks, and belly swipes are potentially dangerous, so *be careful!*

Keep in mind that "simpler is better" working with young actors. You must have the physical area to be used for each separate combat clearly in mind. Use chalk, or taped

lines on the stage floor in rehearsal to help them remember!

For instance, if you have four groups of fighters, give them as much room as you can, so that they don't run into each other. Staging Group 1 upstage center, Group 2 downstage center, Group 3 far stage right, and Group 4 far stage left, *should* keep them out of each other's hair.

Consider a few simple pattern changes to keep things interesting. Groups 1 and 2 can change positions after a few moves. Make sure that both groups have the same number of strokes! That way, both fights should end at about the same time. Then—on a clear, loud shout that all parties are aware of—they can change positions, adding to the battle "confusion."

You can also have escalating fights, to draw out small amounts of choreography. For example, Group 1 can run on and begin, then Groups 2 and 3 can enter and add on, saving Group 4 for an appropriate moment. "Extras" or non-fighters can add to the excitement by either running through the set, entering and watching, falling (carefully) onstage and dying from unseen, offstage wounds, or crawling onto upper levels to cheer for their side.

Another tip for battle scenes, as well as smaller two-person fights, is slow motion. With a lighting change, some mood music under, or perhaps low drums, a slow motion fight can look very good, and may be even more dramatic than a "real speed" fight. Work the performers carefully through every detail of the fight, perhaps using a metronome to keep them all in the same time frame.

I've also used the technique of having all weapons mimed by the company. Young people are usually very physical and creative, and many have played "war" with pretend weapons, so this technique is very

natural to them. Mime also opens up a huge world of possibilities, from bows and arrows, to knife throws, to supersonic ray guns!

Children's theatre and fights in musicals often lend themselves to a stylized approach. Conflicts in these types of shows can often be "danced," without need for realistic violence. *West Side Story* is a good example.

What about musicals such as *Camelot*, *Man of La Mancha*, and *Carousel*? If the work is approached from the first

as a dance, some of the dangerous energy of young performers can be diffused. Props can then be opened up to include suggestive weapons, i.e., lengths of plastic tubing for swords, red scarves for blood, a windmill made of actor's bodies and sheets, and other non-traditional and creative ideas.

Little is to be gained dramatically by imposing a difficult and realistic battle on performers incapable of safe execution. *Less is more* is a good rule here. When gathering props and making swords, remember that they must be safe, but sturdy. A wooden sword that breaks after two rehearsals, sails across stage and hits the pianist in the head, is not a safe prop.

Likewise, a hit on the head with a wooden sword is an invitation to visit the local emergency room. Wood is hard stuff, and must be treated with respect. A wooden sword must be pretty sturdy and thick around the handle to hold its own weight, and not snap off. Edges and points must be looked after too, so they're not too pointy or sharp. Rounded and *dull, dull, dull* is the key here.

Another idea for mock swords are lengths of hollow plastic, similar to golf club liners, padded with foam and wrapped with silver "gaffer's tape." A guard of some kind must be fashioned to protect the hand, but these "swords" are light and

A wooden sword that breaks after two rehearsals, sails across stage and hits the pianist in the head, is not a safe prop.



From *The Masque of St. George and the Dragon* presented by the Lee Strasberg Creative Center.
Photo: David Gideon

easily wielded by small hands. They can also be cut short, to fit!

Prop swords aren't meant for long cut-and-parry sequences. Wood will splinter and weaken from this kind of abuse. Wooden swords are for swinging around, threatening, and miming cuts, *never* for actual combat. The same is true for plastic, although since plastic is so light, some "fighting" is possible. I refer specifically to toy, hollow, molded plastic swords available in toy stores, or those made carefully with sturdy materials.

Never construct a sword out of hard plexiglass as it is too brittle, and when it breaks, leaves a very sharp edge.

Distance between fighters is usually a difficult concept for professional actors. It is much more so for young performers. If you are staging a fight between two or more characters, watch them closely, and you'll see them creep in on each other. Try to keep them as far apart as possible so that the "swords" can just barely touch.

One helpful exercise is to have one character hold out his sword at full length, and allow his partner to "cut" at it. They may then switch, with the former partner "laying it on." Remind them throughout the rehearsals to always keep far apart.

A very effective and safe "bopper"

can be made of bubble paper, used for packing breakables. A loose wrapping of bubble paper, two inches wide, and covered loosely with tape or cloth can make a soft club that, when used, sounds like a terrific blow. Care must be taken on delivery, though, to prevent bruising, or worse.

Blows should *never* be aimed with full force, but with glancing energy. Blows should also *never* be aimed at the head, eyes, kidneys, groin, face, or other sensitive area, but to major muscle groups such as the stomach, thigh, or upper arm.

Soft "replacement" props can be used in a number of ways. A black sock filled with cotton or fur will look like a blackjack, but can't hurt the actors. I have even staged a caveman fight, using painted foam rubber rocks, and soft clubs, that was very effective.

Plays that require young performers to swordfight must always be approached with caution. A play such as *Dreaming and Duelling*, about a high school romance, calls for sport fencing scenes. Here, however, performers can be encased in fencing masks, gloves, and jackets to protect them from errant points and edges.

But what about other plays? I have often done *Hamlet* with full fencing gear in professional theatre. This could easily be done for community or high school productions. If an ambitious play such as one of Shakespeare's histories is attempted, and the use of modern fencing masks is unacceptable, why not use helmets?

Even a standard, like *Romeo and Juliet*, set in modern times, can get away with protective equipment for the performers. Though it is not right for every production, standard sports fencing equipment is safe, stylish, widely available, and a safe alternative for inexperienced actors.

Finally, a word about kills. For inexperienced performers, realistic "kills" are out of the question, and perhaps inappropriately violent. Stabs, cuts, thrusts, and lunges with metal swords are technically advanced illusions, and are quite

dangerous for professional performers, not to mention the untrained and over-eager.

"Kills" at this level are better "indicated" to the audience, rather than attempt to be realistic. Control of a metal or wooden sword or knife is difficult, especially in the midst of an emotional, climactic moment like a kill, with the added nervousness of being in front of an audience.

The easiest way to kill a character with a sword, is a tried-and-true thrust under the upstage armpit. The sword, however, should never be aimed straight at another performer, but rather laid up against the ribs sideways for safety.

As a rule, cuts with the "edge" of a wooden or plastic sword, are safer than thrusts or lunges. This way, the point is never moving directly at another performer. If the "edge" of the sword is placed on another's stomach or, say, leg, and drawn back carefully, clearing it out of the way, with an appropriate reaction from the character being wounded or killed, it can look very effective and is reasonably safe.

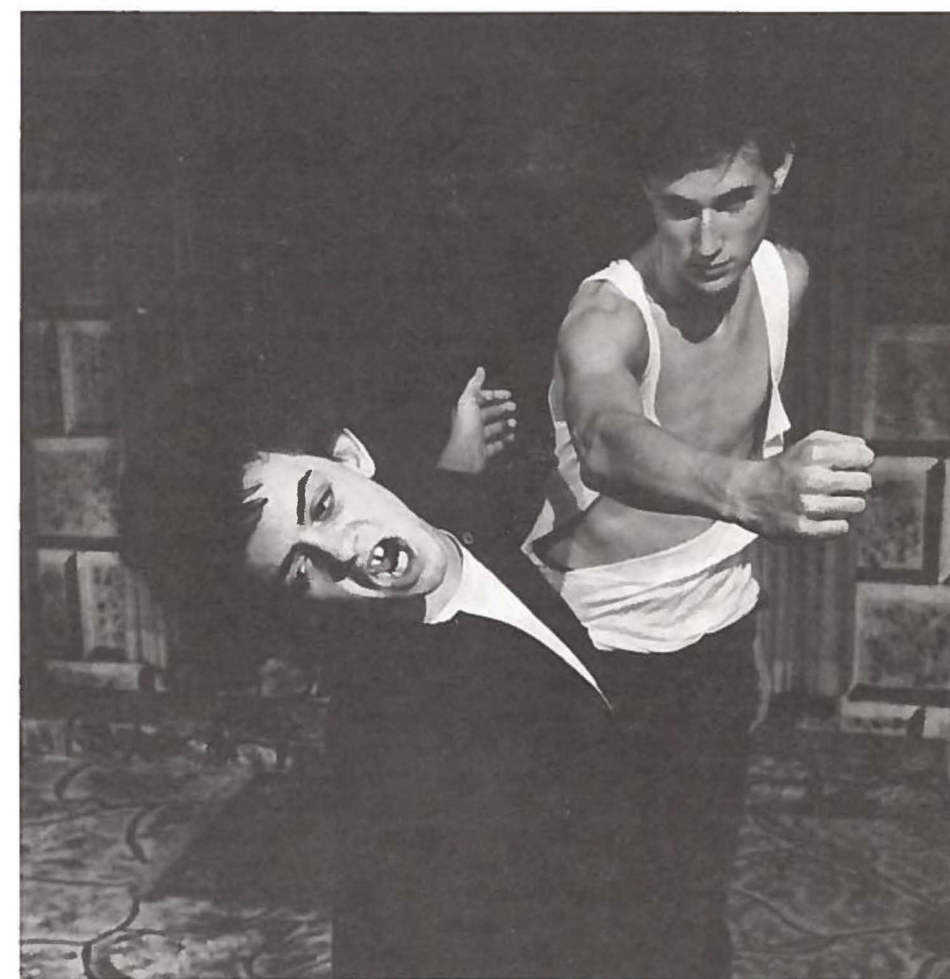
The danger comes from drawing the sword up toward the face, failing to clear it out of the way of the other performer or "slapping" it in too forcefully.

Another danger can come from too violent a reaction to the wound, where a performer throws him or herself onto the floor without looking, or toward his partner, crashing into them, or running into the sword.

Rather than risk this type of injury, the performer should sink slowly to the ground, or fall into the waiting arms of some handy "extras," "attendants," or "soldiers" who can catch him and lower him to the floor. Swords, or other weapons should, of course, be dropped or otherwise cleared before the actor falls into waiting arms, as "catchers" could be injured by these props.

High falls are *never* attempted by those unfamiliar with the difficulty and great risk of these specialized stunts.

A stab with a knife should always be turned aside at the last moment



Good vs. Evil as student actors play out a climactic confrontation scene from *Dracula*. Photo courtesy of Barry Nyquist, Director of Drama at Keith School.

and not delivered with contact. This is even true of a rubber or plastic knife. A metal knife, even dulled down, can severely injure someone if it strikes home. Lethal knives should not be used, unless by someone carefully trained in stage combat.

It should also go without saying that inexperienced performers must never be trusted with firearms of any kind. A "bang, you're dead" pretend policy is the safest. A toy plastic gun may be used in some situations.

To wrap this up, I think that many, many types of combat scenes can be staged with young and/or untrained community performers so long as certain safety principals are adhered to (see box). But, to attempt too much is to risk injury and no production is worth that price. Care-

ful attention to detail, not pushing the performers beyond their limits, and a little creativity can go a long way to minimize risk.

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This article is excerpted from Alan's upcoming book, *Safety in Stage Combat*, to be published by Harwood Academic Publishers.

THE ELEVEN COMMANDMENTS OF STAGING FIGHTS FOR UNTRAINED, BUT EAGER ACTORS

- I. Keep weapons away from head and face areas.
- II. Never use real, firing guns, pistols, or rifles of any kind.
- III. Keep it simple.
- IV. Use the crowd.
- V. Rehearse it from the beginning, not at the last minute.
- VI. Do not use metal swords if something else will do.
- VII. Augment combat scenes with lighting and sound effects.
- VIII. Make sure prop weapons are padded, and dulled down.
- IX. Pay close attention to spacing of performers, and distance between them.
- X. Watch out for excessive energy and enthusiasm.
- XI. Less is more!

ENGLISH TO THE CORE, GENTLEMAN BY BIRTH, SWORDSMAN BY CHOICE

George Silver stood forth as defender of the cut and thrust, and preserver of tradition against foreign encroachment. "Beware false teachers of defence" he warned.

BY
J.D. MARTINEZ

In this second article in a series profiling ancient Masters of Defence (ed. For the first article see "A Tale of Jealousy, Swordplay, and a Certain Italian," in Vol. XIII no 3. of the Fight Master) Joseph Martinez examines a staunch supporter of the English Masters of Defence of the late sixteenth century—George Silver!

The personalities and exploits of a few of the ancient swordsmen and teachers have left a tantalizing trail of their lives and times. These ancient Masters of Defence are the spiritual forefathers of the modern Fight Master.

Perhaps because England is an island, its people have traditionally been wary of foreign ways. The Englishman enjoys the virtues born of isolated self-reliance as well as the vice of extreme provincialism. In Shakespeare's *The Life and Death*

of King John, Philip the Bastard sums up the Englishman's pride in righteous self-reliance, "Nought shall make us rue, If England to itself do rest but true."

The English Masters of Defence teaching in London in the late sixteenth century were very jealous of their turf. They resented bitterly the growing influence of foreign fencing instructors who were popular with the fashionable Elizabethan courtiers.

George Silver, a gentleman by birth, became a spokesman for the English fencing masters when he wrote a marvelous little manuscript entitled *Paradoxe of Defence* wherein is proved the true ground of fight to be in the short auncient weapons, and that the Short Sword hath the advantage of the long sword or long rapier, and the weakness and imperfection of the rapier fight displayed. Together with an admonition to the noble, ancient, victorious, valiant and most brave nation of Englishmen, to beware of false teachers of defence and how they forsake their own naturall

fight; with a brief commendation of the noble science or exercising of arms.

Although George Silver was a Gentleman, probably engaged financially in the cloth dying trade, and not a Master of Defence who had served his fourteen years of apprenticeship and taken his Master's test against all challengers, he did profess excellence in all of the most common weapons of his day.

The impressive array of weaponry listed in his challenge to Italian swordsman Vincentio Saviolo (see box), were the weapons of the English soldier and the middle classes.

George Silver wrote a fascinating second book around 1600, which was probably never published, on the techniques of swordplay; the manuscript still exists.

It is this manuscript, *Brief Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence for the handling of all manner of weapons together with the four grounds and the four governors, which governors are left out in my paradoxes without the knowledge of which no man can fight safe. Together with the admonitions to the gentlemen and brave gallants of Great Britain against quarrels and brawls*, that a modern fight choreographer may refer to when recreating the English forms of swordfighting with single-handed broadswords.

It is very likely that George Silver's techniques are an excellent example of the style taught by the majority of the English Masters of Defence.

The English Masters of Defence, much like the SAFFD, had organized standards for its members. In the early 1500s the English Masters of Defence supposedly received "Letters Patent" from King Henry VIII granting them a monopoly to teach arms

A HOT-BLOODED RIVALRY BETWEEN MASTERS OF DEFENCE

In *Paradoxe of Defence*, published in 1599, Silver relates an incident which typifies the rivalry between the English and Foreign Masters of Defence: (The following is printed in its original peculiar spelling.)

Despite their best efforts, George Silver and the English Masters of Defence failed to discredit or push the foreign teachers off the island.

"These two Italian Fencers, especially Vencentio, said that Englishmen were strong men but had no cunning, and they would go backe too much in their fight, which was a great disgrace unto them. Upon these words or disgrace my brother Toby Silver and my selfe, made a challenge against them both to play ["play" meant to fight

with weapons] with them at the single Rapier, Rapier and Dagger, the single Dagger, the single Sword, the Sword and Target, the Sword and Buckler, and two hand Sword, the Staffe, battell Axe, and Morris Pike, to be played at the Bell Savage upon the Scaffold [stage]. When he that went in his fight faster backe than he ought, shold be in danger to breake his necke off the Scaffold. We caused to that effect five or sixe score bills of challenge to be printed, and set up from Southwarke to the Tower, and from thence through London unto Westminster, we were at the place with all these weapons at the time appointed, within a bow shot of the Fence-Schoole: manie gentlemen of good accompt carried manie of the bills of challenge unto them, telling them that now the Silvers were at the place appointed, with all their weapons, looking for them, and a multitude of people there to beholde the fight, saying unto them: now come and go with us (you shall take no wrong), or else you are shamed for ever.

Do the gentlemen what they could, these gallants would not come to the place of trial."

in England. From that period of time they enforced their standards upon teachers of fencing throughout Great Britain.

The techniques taught by the English Masters of Defence were most assuredly handed down to them from the medieval period. The techniques would have then been refined for the lighter swords of the Elizabethan era.

Since Silver advocated both the cut and the thrust, his

techniques are wonderfully adaptable to theatrical swordplay. Choosing to use Silver's techniques when choreographing Mercutio's side of

the duel in *Romeo and Juliet*, for example, would create an interesting contrast to Tybalt's "Italianate" style of rapier play.

If you are interested in learning more about George Silver's theories of swordplay, I recommend Craig Turner and Tony Soper's excellent book, *Methods and Practice of Elizabethan Swordplay*, Southern Illinois University Press.

As a young man arriving in London in the 1580s, with the hope of becoming an actor, Shakespeare would have certainly studied swordfighting, either with a member of the theatre company he

apprenticed with, or through private lessons. Perhaps he prepared for his trip to the big city by taking lessons in swordplay while still in Stratford.

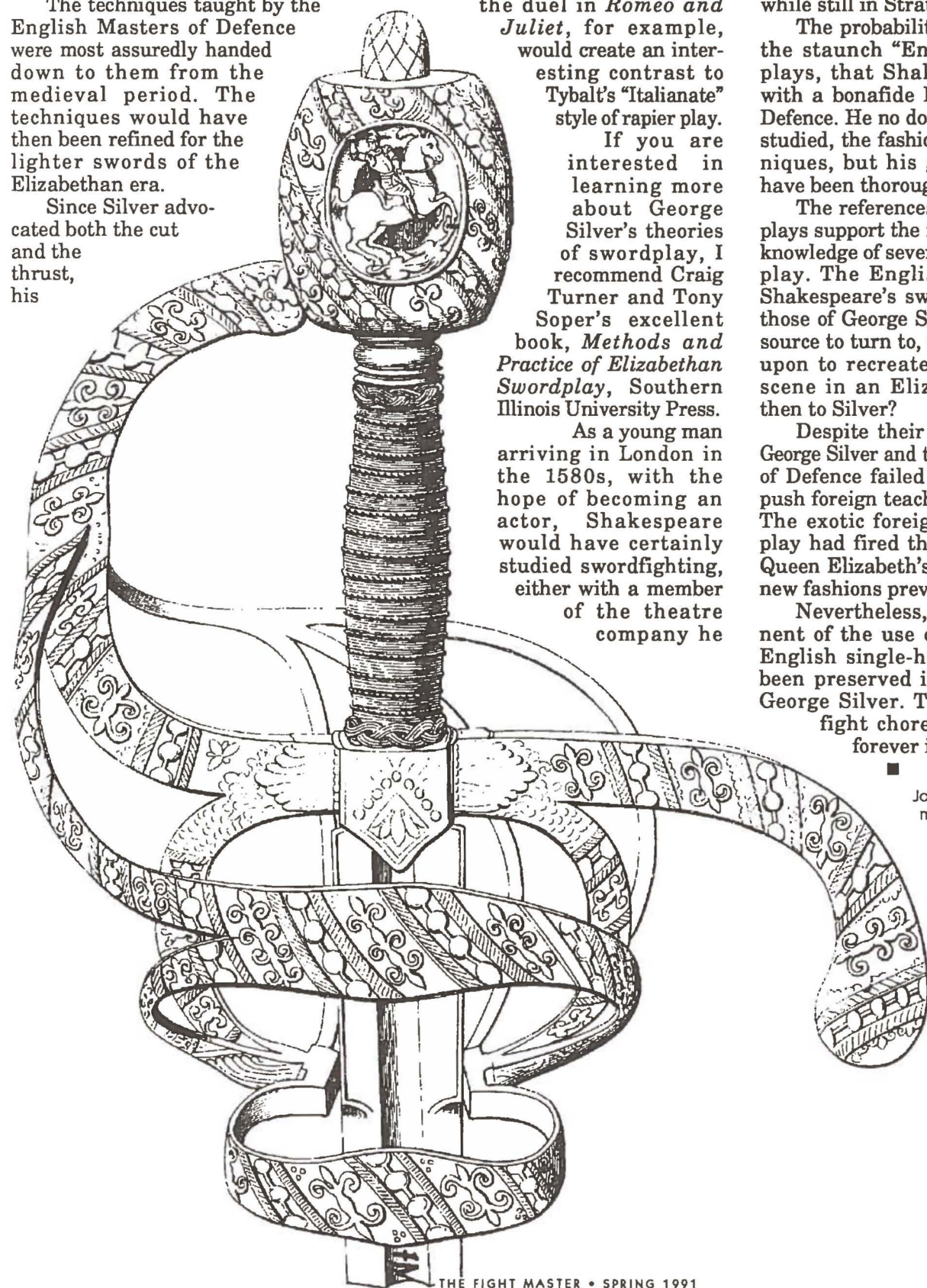
The probability is, judging from the staunch "Englishness" of his plays, that Shakespeare studied with a bonafide English Master of Defence. He no doubt knew, perhaps studied, the fashionable rapier techniques, but his grounding would have been thoroughly English.

The references in Shakespeare's plays support the fact of his intimate knowledge of several styles of swordplay. The English techniques of Shakespeare's swordplay would be those of George Silver. What better source to turn to, when one is called upon to recreate a duel or battle scene in an Elizabethan drama, then to Silver?

Despite their best efforts, both George Silver and the English Masters of Defence failed to discredit or to push foreign teachers off the island. The exotic foreign ways of rapier play had fired the imaginations of Queen Elizabeth's courtiers and the new fashions prevailed.

Nevertheless, the finest proponent of the use of the traditional English single-handed sword has been preserved in the writings of George Silver. The modern stage fight choreographer will be forever in his debt.

Joseph D. Martinez is a fight master, associate professor of theatre at Washington and Lee University, and the author of *Combat Mime, A Non-Violent Approach to Stage Violence*.



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OF FIGHTS AND FILM; A CONVERSATION WITH WILLIAM HOBBS

From *The Three Musketeers* to *Lady Hawk* to *Hamlet*, almost everyone has thrilled to the fights staged by fight master William Hobbs. Here he takes some time out between Mel Gibson's *Hamlet* and the Kevin Costner *Robin Hood* to discuss his work.

BY
CHARLES CONWELL

Where does one interview the foremost swordsman in cinema today? In the yard of a small house in rural Germany, with cows on one side and chickens on the other.

William Hobbs lives in the countryside near Cologne, between two feuding brothers—old German farmers who have not spoken to each other for years. One lives in the barn behind Hobbs, the other in the farmhouse across the street.

A London resident for many years, Hobbs relocated to Germany because his wife is the director of marriage counseling at a nearby British army base. Before

getting into his car, Hobbs checks underneath for IRA bombs!

Hobbs, a small man, speaks gently and certainly doesn't epitomize the aggressive swordplay he has directed for *The Duelists*, *The Three and Four Musketeers*, *Dangerous Liaisons*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*, starring Gerard Depardieu. My wife and I saw *Cyrano* in Paris, so the interview began with a discussion of the battle in that movie.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

The story called for Spanish cavalry, musketeers, and pikemen to attack the French, who fight from behind a hastily assembled barricade. The battle was filmed in three weeks in Hungary. Hobbs used an interpreter to work with the Hungarian stunt team and a unit of the Hungarian army.

Hobbs trained the stunt team. Then, each stunt man was assigned a group of soldiers and trained them in the do's and don'ts of simulated combat. A horsemaster trained the cavalry. The horses had to be accustomed to gunfire and smoke.

Hobbs likened the film's Hungarians to the Irish in their love of fighting. "Let them loose and you can't stop them!" Soldiers used wooden swords which broke frequently during filming. Foreground action was personally choreographed by Hobbs. The battle was carefully rehearsed



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The actors square off for the climactic small sword duel in *Dangerous Liaisons*.

and filmed shot-by-shot with three different cameras.

Unlike theater, "there is only one chance in film to get it right, on the day." Hobbs must successfully create each sequence the day it is filmed. A tremendous amount of money is invested in each day's filming. Mistakes and injuries are expensive and could cost the fight director his job.

THE CINEMA FIGHT

Hobbs is constantly imagining alternatives in order to adapt to the frequently changing conditions of filming. The cinema fight is a molding process which continues throughout shooting. Hobbs watches the rushes each evening, but there is no going back. Hopefully, the different camera angles and different takes provide a good choice of shots. Hobbs can only point out the best shots; or say, "Please, don't use that!"

The rushes have been an education for Hobbs. He's learned what works on film and what doesn't. He avoids pirouette-like movements

and avoidances. However effective theatrically, these moves do not work on film.

Hobbs prefers to maintain blade contact during any evasions, as he believes that film demands a greater degree of realism and intention than theater. Although punches are pulled and the fencers work just out of distance, "You have to actually go at it." The camera will record anything less than complete commitment as "choreography."

Undercranking and overcranking to slow down and speed up the film are still used, but the change of speed is infinitesimal.

Planning and communications are paramount. Potential hazards must be eliminated in advance. Costumes, crew, cast, stunt team, horsemaster, special effects, props, set dressings and locations must be precisely coordinated in advance.

Set dressings arrive at the last minute. Hobbs must make sure that the set dressers give him exactly what he needs and that nothing is placed where it doesn't belong.

The rushes have been an education for Hobbs. He's learned what works on film and what doesn't.

The *Cyrano* duel takes place in the street outside the theater. Location photographs showed a rough, cobblestoned street—a hazard to fencers in high-heeled

boots. Hobbs requested the cobblestones be overlaid with a smoother, rubber, simulated-cobblestone surface. To save money, his request was ignored. The actor playing Valvert badly sprained his ankle on the first move of the first shot. The duel sequence was postponed for six weeks while the ankle mended.

This injury is a notable exception to Hobbs' safety record. He usually anticipates danger and eliminates it. Once, at 11:15 p.m., Hobbs insisted on stopping the day's filming. The

actors were obviously tired and mistakes were being made. One actor had already brushed against a hand-held camera.

"It was transparent that the next moment there was going to be an accident. There was danger. I could smell it." The first assistant director supported Hobbs over the objections of both the director and the actors. The next day neither director nor actors were grateful. They all said it should have gone on.

Hobbs demands enough rehearsal time in film and gets it, either contractually or by gentlemen's agreement. He feels this issue is neglected in the theatre. A good movie director always asks Hobbs how much time he needs.

The *Cyrano* duel was rehearsed two to three hours a day for three

weeks before filming began. It was shot in four or five days, weeks later. Depardieu began by working with Hobbs' assistant, Michelle Carliez, a French fencer, stuntman, and fight director.

Depardieu, a former boxer, was uncomfortable with the fencing positions Carliez had taught him. When Hobbs arrived he allowed Depardieu to fight in a style more natural to his boxing experience. "Depardieu was delighted."

"AN IMAGE OF THE FIGHT"

As a young fight director Hobbs choreographed and recorded "every damn move" in advance. Now he prefers to begin rehearsal with just "an image of the fight." Sometimes he will create a story board of the fight he envisions. The image of the fight comes from character. "With-

out the characters I wouldn't know where to start. How can the audience be interested in the fight, if they aren't interested in the people?"

Hobbs improvises with actors as he trains them. He obtains a better fight by engaging the actors' creative energies, creating choreography specifically for them. He's usually able to do this without sacrificing his original image of the fight.

Hobbs always engages doubles for principal actors. Sometimes they are used and sometimes they are not. Hobbs uses them for sequences which are too difficult for the actors to recreate with expertise. They also stand by to step in should an actor in any way become incapacitated. With so much money involved in every shot, shooting must not stop.

Doubles were used extensively

Hobbs keeps a careful eye on a final fight rehearsal for *Cyrano de Bergerac*



in *The Three and Four Musketeers*. In *Cyrano*, the Valvert double was never used. Carliez doubled occasionally for Depardieu. The lead actors in *Dangerous Liaisons* did all their own fighting. The same two doubles Hobbs used in *Cyrano* just stood by.

DANGEROUS LIAISONS

The decision to film the *Liaisons* duel in the snow was not made by

Hobbs. The actors did wear special shoes to minimize slipping. Hobbs was disappointed that the nuances and subtleties of the choreographed fight were not captured in the film. Hobbs does not usually participate in film

editing. Ironically he *was* asked to help edit *Liaisons* but was already committed elsewhere.

THE DUELISTS

Hobbs himself doubled in the first duel of *The Duelists*. Ridley Scott, the director, held a camera in one hand and placed his other arm around Hobbs' waist as Hobbs fenced with Harvey Keitel. Keitel's antagonist in this duel was played by Alec Guinness' son, Matthew.

The wonderful ring of clashing steel in this movie was dubbed. Hobbs frequently uses duralium (aircraft aluminum) swords, but in *The Duelists*, Keith Carradine and Keitel insisted on using steel. Their duels were rehearsed for only one week prior to filming as the budget on this film was tight.

Hobbs' fights are noted for their unpredictability, brutality, and just plain roughhouse. This style is epitomized in the cavalry saber fight in the cellar in *The Duelists*. "When men are fighting to kill each other, anything can happen. Things don't go perfectly right."

Shunning the clean, romantic look of Hollywood fencing, Hobbs directs by instinct. "There are only two rules, 'Does it look good?' and 'Is it safe?' You can justify practically

anything you do by period prints."

FROM OLYMPICS TO OLD VIC

Hobbs invented his technique and his career. "I made it up as I went along." Like Cavens, Faulkner, and Crean, he began as a competitive fencer. Hobbs was a member of the New South Wales Olympic Foil Squad. But he aspired to be an actor.

When the London Old Vic toured

Australia, Hobbs was one of three locals hired as spear carriers. Later, when he was attending drama school in London, he was asked to direct a television fight. "I didn't know what I was doing."

After graduation he accepted an acting position at the Bristol Old Vic. The London Old Vic, recalling that he fenced, asked him if he'd like to join their acting company the following season and direct the fencing in *Romeo and Juliet*. "I'd love to. Stage fights are usually badly done; but I don't want to join the company"... It was cheek." Hobbs decided to accept their offer. He was twenty-one.

That production of *Romeo and Juliet*, directed by Franco Zeffereilli, toured internationally for two years. Hobbs' fights were seen all over the world. Hobbs trained the actors for Zeffereilli's film, but did not direct the fights.

Hobbs' book, *Stage Fight*, was published in 1967 at a time when there were no other books on this subject in print. Hobbs wished to introduce stage combat and encourage further inquiry. The book was never intended to be comprehensive. Hobbs now considers it out of date and would like to write another, more anecdotal, book about his career.

HAMLET

At the time of this interview, Hobbs had just finished directing the fencing match in Zeffereilli's *Hamlet*, starring Mel Gibson. Zeffereilli set the action in the eleventh century.

Matching this setting logically to the the seventeenth century fencing match described in the text presented real problems. "You can't have bated and unbated weapons. Hamlet and Laertes fight with a variety of broadswords. They change weapons and protective clothing for each bout, and they fight on a large square of wooden floorboards placed in the castle's great hall. Hobbs had worked with Gibson and his Laertes for three weeks before filming began.

Hobbs is now fifty-one. What fight would he like to do next? "I'm fairly bored with fighting." He would like to direct musical theater and pick and choose only the most interesting fights.

Are Hobbs' sons (now 27 and 25) excited about their father's swash-buckling career? "Other than wanting Mel Gibson's autograph, they think that what I do is a lot of rubbish."

Charles Conwell is an assistant professor of theater at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia and a certified teacher in the SAFD. His interview with William Hobbs took place in August, 1990.

THEATRICAL HOPLOLOGY: A STAGE VIOLENCE METHODOLOGY

Hoplology, from the Greek word hoplite, a knight of ancient Greece. Hopology is the study of combative behavior at all levels and theatrical hopology is a method of approaching stage combat.

BY
DR. ROBERT W.
DILLON, JR.

Much of the work of the pioneers of stage combat and fight directing (and, by implication, the Society of American Fight Directors, of course) has centered upon finding a sound methodology for not only staging scenes of violence, but for criticism, theory, evaluation, assessment, and interpretation. These efforts have sought for a methodology beyond what A. L. Soens has termed the "thud and blunder parody of fencing forced on most modern Shakespeare audiences."

Specific goals and methods, however individualistic and personal they may be, have rightly emphasized the development of a repertoire of techniques and a system for insuring safety in practice and performance. A "unifying theory" for stage combat, a concrete methodology for assessment and analysis beyond extrapolations of "historically accurate" technique and theatrical adaptations of techniques of modern fencing, has begun to evolve from this work. This unifying theory, this methodology, needs only articulation and formalization (and publication) for it to be fully realized and widely utilized.

To facilitate this realization and in order to underpin, invigorate, and formalize ongoing work in safety and

technique, I here propose a combination of playscript analysis and the science of hopology. This composite discipline I have termed theatrical hopology.

Primary focus is upon: (1) placing fight scenes within their appropriate dramatic context, and (2) placing fight scenes within appropriate hopological contexts within the boundaries of the theatrical context. It is, in other words, a theatrical discipline heavily overlaid with a scientific one. It suggests a program useful in planning, preparing, and executing fights while it offers a foundation for examination, interpretation, and evaluation of fights on a theoretical, critical, and practical level lifted above the limitations of historical research. Historical and technical data may be located through a hopological approach while covering a much broader territory than history alone.

Hoplology (from the Greek hoplite or "knight") is the study of the origins, patterns, relationships, and phenomenology of combative behaviors at all levels of social complexity. Hopologists have aimed at developing a systematic study of man's combative culture in all ages. Weapons, armor, combative accouterments, and fighting systems,



not only with regard to their technical characteristics, but also with the ways in which they interact with economic, political, social, and religious institutions of human societies are the province of the hoplologist.

HOPLOLOGY: THREE AREAS

The discipline has concentrated on producing data in the following three areas: (1) technological hoplology; (2) functional hoplology; and (3) behavioral hoplology.

(1) Technological hoplology is the study of the technology of weapons, the environmental factors, materials, production processes, and conservation of weapons, armor, and accouterments. Technological hoplology looks at the physical facts of a weapon's development, evolution and existence.

(2) Functional hoplology is the study of the structure, organization, development, and practice of combative systems within the context of the reciprocal relationships between such systems and the weapons they use. Functional hoplology looks at the practical application (real or idealized, formal or informal) of weapons.

(3) Behavioral hoplology is the study of the psychological and physiological factors at work in man's combative activity. Behavioral hoplology looks at the ideas, philosophy, religious notions, and psychology interwoven with the creation and perpetuation of weapons and weapons systems by cultures and by individual men and women. Through hoplology a complete picture of a weapon or weapon system becomes possible by interlocking the weapon itself, its possibilities of use, and the ideas it substantiates within a broad concept of man as a combative and creative creature. It is a sociocultural science.

In theatrical hoplology, the tools of playscript analysis interlock with the strategies of playscript analysis.

In theatrical hoplology, the tools of playscript analysis interlock with the strategies of playscript analysis.

This results in an appropriate method of analysis for situating a sword fight or other violence within its dramatic and theatrical context—which is the specific goal and province of theatrical hoplology.

EIGHT MODES OF ANALYSIS

The modes of textual analysis of greatest direct impact upon the territory explored by theatrical hoplology are (1) structural analysis, (2) operational analysis, (3) dynamic analysis, (4) rhetorical analysis, and (5) affective analysis.

Subsidiary modes of analysis in theatrical hoplology are (6) imagistic, and (7) thematic. Another mode of

analysis of importance within theatrical hoplology is (8) formal analysis. Each of these amounts to careful and deliberate close reading of the text aimed at locating clues within the

text and bringing them to light. In this kind of analysis the text is viewed as a complex recipe which must be decoded before the end product can be concocted from the ingredients listed. These analytical modes are defined as follows:

STRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

Structural analysis seeks to uncover the shape of a scene. It is the analysis of the parts of a scene and how they fit together. In structural analysis the basic unit of observation is the narrative episode, the "what happens" in a sequence of dramatic actions, especially the event—the intersection of two forces—contained in a narrative episode.

In theatrical hoplology structural analysis is concerned with determining (a) how the parts of a fight work together to create a whole, and (b) how the fight functions as part of a larger set of conflicts that make up the dramatic action of the play.

The hoplological tool most closely allied with structural analysis is functional hoplology, since specific techniques are isolated within it and

since these techniques are the basic structural elements. Behavioral hoplology and technological hoplology often overlap functional hoplology in the analysis of the structure of stage fights.

The structural methodology of theatrical hoplology is useful in designing and executing fights, as well as in examining the structure of extant examples of fights. It begins with the construction of a structural matrix for the scene or scenes in question.

Structure is thought of here as containing the terms content, form, integrity (the fight's wholeness), and integration (the fight's placement as part of the wholeness of a play). The structural content matrix is divided into four distinct sections which form a chronological plan for the fight. These are: inception, imbroglio (including any minor climaxes), climax, and resolution.

These structural definitions are also of importance in written discussions of a performed fight or in dealing with problems in rehearsal. Thus the structural terminology is handy in dealing with the fight at all levels: practical, theoretical, and critical.

For example, when Tybalt and his cohorts enter in Act III: scene 1 of *Romeo and Juliet* the inception phase of the fight to come begins. Romeo enters and Tybalt, ignoring the prodding of Mercutio, taunts Romeo mercilessly. The insults and blatant challenge goad Mercutio into calling Tybalt a "ratcatcher" (3.1.71). Finally, Tybalt draws his sword saying "I am for you" (3.1.81).

The inception ends and the imbroglio begins with Shakespeare's "They Fight" stage direction. The resolution phase of the fight begins when Mercutio is hit under Romeo's arm, and ends when Benvolio gives the report that: "Brave Mercutio is dead!" (3.1.114) which begins, in this play, another fight inception.

The fight moves from the most covert to the most overt conflict. Structural analysis reveals the pattern inherent in each fight and gives clues to rhythm, pace, tempo, and "shape."

OPERATIONAL ANALYSIS

Operational analysis begins with an examination of possible cues and clues to the appearance of the world of a play and uncovers the elements of setting and props which will function as a part of that world: the mise-en-scène. It suggests the physical accouterments found in a scene, including weapons.

The basic unit of observation here is the playwright's setting—all descriptive suggestions, overt and covert, which indicate the physical appearance of the play and scene—and any lines of dialogue containing references to the physical world of the play.

In theatrical hoplology operational analysis links primarily with technological hoplology—with overlap from the behavioral and functional levels—in determining the kinds, types, and styles of weapons to be used in a given scene or play (see box).

Hopological sensibility in theatrical hoplology supplants the notion of historical accuracy in creating the mise-en-scène as it concerns itself with the physical world of a play. A historical, semi-historical, pseudo-historical, meta-historical, or non-historical setting is, through the level of operational analysis, matched with weapons and characters. The first setting type, historical, requires close scrutiny and attention to "accurate" detail, the second less so, and the third even less and so on.

Where a non-realistic, non-historical milieu is to be used, ideas from the technological, functional, and behavioral facets of hoplology may be freely adapted from cross-matrixes of place, time, and culture. Imaginary weapons, in other words, may be designed and built to fit imaginary worlds.

Imaginary people use these weapons in ways discoverable through functional and behavioral hoplology. Thus, a sword without a hilt or some sort of grip is unlikely even in a totally imaginary world and no person, even in a fantasy world, will attempt to stab with his

sword hilt—unless he is an imbecile or fool (or a weapon design makes this possible, practical, and probable within the world of the play.)

DYNAMIC ANALYSIS

Dynamic analysis is a search for clues to the behavior of characters. Dynamic analysis pinpoints the dramatic necessities confronting actors using period weaponry.

Behavioral hoplology is the primary tool used in establishing the ground zero of behavior with weapons, their use, and the psychology which surrounds them. Observation of the dynamics suggested by dialogue, descriptions of mimed actions, or other evidence of the character's "strategic" energies, when combined with the overview offered by behavioral hoplology will determine the hoplological behavior of a specific dramatic character.

In dynamic analysis the play and scene are conceived of as containers of potential energy which is released as a character's "strategy" implicit in each line of dialogue.

The basic units of observation are the character's speeches, other character's dialogue about that character, and stage directions indicating actions. "They Fight" is a direct dynamic cue of the sort often used by Shakespeare. More subtle cues are found in speeches, such as Macbeth's

"Before my body I throw my warlike shield," and Laertes' "Have at you now!" in which are situated suggestions of physical actions.

Through such clues actors and directors map out their excursions through the actor's performance, the actions of the characters, and to the dramatic action of the play. Technological and functional hoplology impact upon the periphery of this area.

A secondary set of dynamic factors impacts upon casting practices. Since actors must enact the strategies discovered in dynamic analysis, and since fights must be fought by actors, production terms must assess the dynamic requirements placed upon the actors by dynamic analysis and contrast those with the actor's abilities and skills. This set of meta-dynamic considerations is summarized as follows:

- The actor's level of fitness.
- The actor's natural skill, "his humanness, his body awareness, his perception of himself as a kinesthetic being."
- The actor's specific training in techniques of stage combat, fencing, or other martial art.
- The actor's confidence and openness. All of these secondary dynamic factors are essential at the level of casting any play with staged fights.

CHOOSING THEATRICAL WEAPONS

A primary principle of theatrical hoplology is that weapons for use in theatrical swordplay need to be carefully chosen or designed under the governing principle of exacting operational considerations.

These considerations are:

- ◆ Weapons must be as safe as possible.
- ◆ Weapons must possess no design features which interfere with their correct use.
- ◆ Weapons must appear to be lethal.
- ◆ Weapons must reflect the character who uses them and vice-versa.
- ◆ Weapons must fit the style, concept, form, and design of the specific production. They must be an integral part of the production vision and they must be integrated into the specific fights in which they appear.

RHETORICAL ANALYSIS

Rhetorical analysis attempts to uncover a belief system in the play or scene and it asks the question "what should the audience believe to be true as they watch this scene?" A play or scene is considered rhetorical in so far as it is a communication designed to convey a point of view toward lived experience and to induce belief in that point of view.

AFFECTIVE ANALYSIS

Affective analysis seeks an answer to the question "what ought an audience to feel in watching this scene?" In rhetorical and affective analysis, the play and scene are conceived of as a communication designed to convey a point of view or to establish a comic or serious tone.

The play induces acceptance of the point of view and solicits recognition of mood and tone through the attitudes of characters toward the "action" of the play. The play's mode of reality, its tone of comedy or seriousness, and its mood of acceptance or rejection condition the point of view.

A fight must reflect the mood, tone, and point of view of the play. The Tybalt-Mercutio fight in *Romeo and Juliet* must have a specific feeling and tone fitting the specific production. An audience must feel an uneasy humor and a mounting fear, as a "game" with swords between two hotheads becomes deadly serious, and it must feel horror and pity as Mercutio's death cry rings out.

Certainly the play does not seem to be asking the audience to believe that young men can achieve great things through violence, and certainly giggles or laughter are appropriate only during certain portions of the fight. By attention to such details, rhetorical and affective analysis of a fight helps place it firmly within the structure of the whole play.

IMAGISTIC ANALYSIS

Imagistic analysis brings the pervasive images of the play or scene into sharp focus and synthesizes these in a likeness of the play

or scene. This likeness is shaped into a commanding image and state in the form of a simile or metaphor. The analysis seeks to answer the question, "What is the play (scene) like?"

The Romeo and Tybalt fight may be likened to a battle between young lions in one analysis or a stylized, blank verse ballet of sword-play in another. What is important in imagistic analysis is that it be firmly anchored to images found in the playscript and not allowed to leap full-blown from the mind of a director. It is primarily useful in communicating with production personnel but it also enhances the general level of understanding by placing the play/scene/fight in a fresh, interesting, and renewed aesthetic light.

THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Thematic analysis observes the referential qualities of the language of the play and accumulates these observations into a statement about some aspect of the world outside the play. The basic unit of observation here is the subject of assertions made by the characters in a play.

When Hamlet observes "To be or not to be, that is the question," *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* is, at that moment, about being, for that is the extra-theatrical issue to which the character has momentarily called our attention. Through these levels of attention, fight scenes may express both the imagistic and thematic threads of the fabric of the whole play.

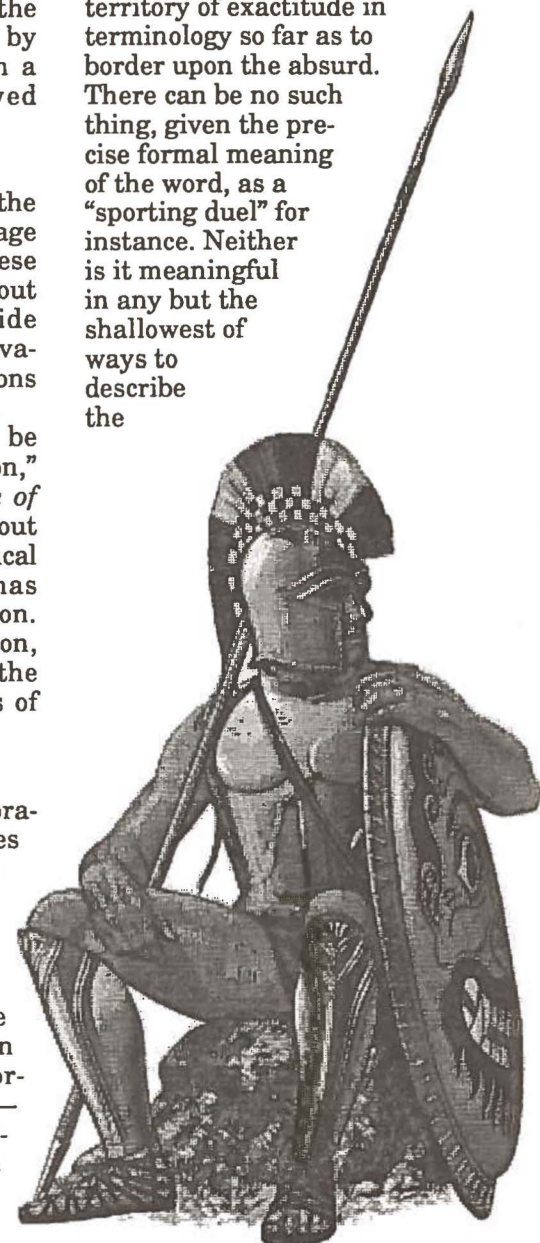
FORMAL ANALYSIS

Formal analysis is the exploration of the principles and purposes of a scene or play. Formal analysis is based on the assumption that a playscript is generated by an impulse to form, to concretize an idea. Likewise, in theatrical hopology, fights are observed to have an essential nature or form in which a distinct manner of coordinating the various elements—observable through hopological-theatrical structure—may be discovered.

Stage fights may be classified into five distinct forms. The form of a fight is determined by its purpose or generative principle and is directly expressed as the structure and content of the fight.

The duel pits one person against another in a form marked by strictures of manners and formality. It is always for blood or the life of the duelists. Honor, life, and limb are at stake in a duel.

It ought to be clear from this discussion of the duel form that the generic use of the term "duel" to describe any paired combative encounter stands outside the territory of exactitude in terminology so far as to border upon the absurd. There can be no such thing, given the precise formal meaning of the word, as a "sporting duel" for instance. Neither is it meaningful in any but the shallowest of ways to describe the



Macbeth-Macduff fight at the end of *Macbeth* as a "duel."

The whole point of formal analysis is to pin down the precise nature and generative principle informing a given fight. The generic and imprecise will not do. A true duel concludes *Les Liaisons Dangereuses*.

The contest pits one against one, one against many, or many against many in a form marked by similar strictures but not always concerned with honor. The primary stake is simple conquest of one contestant over another; life and limb are only secondarily at stake. A contest is fought by Hamlet and Laertes.

The contest is always somewhat artificial in its dependence upon a set of rules which usually have much to do with the safety of the contestants. Often in a true contest a system of points or evaluation by observers determines the victor. This is not the case in any other form.

The battle pits groups against groups, with many fighting many. Life and limb are at risk, few rules apply—although some formality, in the tactical maneuvering of armies, is often present—and honor and territory are often at stake. Battles can be found in *Richard III*.

The brawl has no formal structure, life and limb are threatened and no rules apply. Brawls pit many against many in a flux and flow of individual encounters and massed violence. A brawl can be found in *Othello*.

The encounter may grow out of a battle or a brawl when antagonists meet by some vagary of chance. It pits one against one in a form similar to the duel but less formally structured. Rules may be negated since life, limb, and honor may all be at stake. An encounter is found in the closing scenes of *Macbeth*. The true encounter occurs always because of chance or accident which thrusts the combatants together.

Theatrical hopology offers a firmly founded but broadly based approach to staging, performance, and critical theory for theatrical violence.

Theatrical hopology also helps the designer or director complete the mise-en-scène by realizing the martial element of a historical or imaginary society, culture, or geographical region in specific terms of time, place, and behavior. This is the hopological context.

Secondly, theatrical hopology places a fight in an appropriate dramatic context. Through the discovery of a dramatic context for a fight, new ways of understanding, discussing, elucidating, and interpreting a script may be released and more responsible staging and performance approaches uncovered. The dramatic context results from groundwork in hopology which is firmly embedded in and strongly colored by theatrical sensibility and script analysis.

The two contexts synergize each other and energize the approach to combative theatre—which, if we consider armed combat as the most overt form of Hegelian conflict, includes all theatre.

Robert Dillon is an SAFD member and assistant professor of theater at Southeast Missouri State University. He earned his doctorate in theatre at University of Missouri-Columbia with his dissertation on theatrical hopology, from which this article is drawn.

NOTES

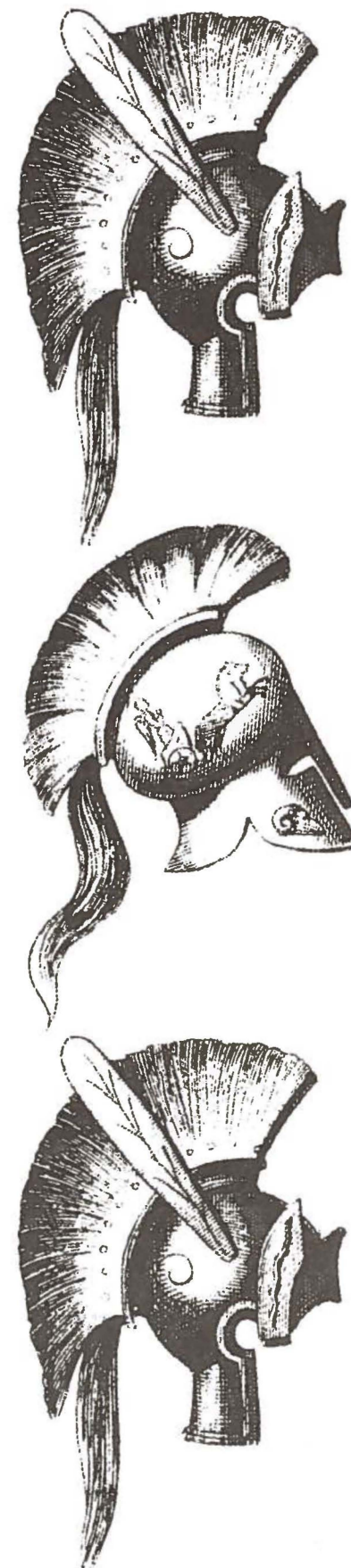
A.L. Soens, "Cudgels and Rapiers: The Staging of the Oswald Edgar Fight in *Lear*," *Shakespeare Studies* 5 (Dubuque, Iowa: William C. Brown Co., 1969), 153.

Hunter Armstrong, "An Introduction to the International Hopology Society," *The International Hopological Society*, pamphlet, 1.

Although Sir Richard Burton, famous 19th century eccentric, explorer, and "amateur" expert in many scientific fields must be credited with founding hopology as a discipline, it is in the work of Donn F. Draeger that hopology was brought to the level of maturity it now enjoys. Draeger opened the field in the sixties and helped open the world's first hopological museum at the University of Hawaii while taking the first master's degree ever earned in the field. Draeger's books are legion and groundbreaking, particularly in the field of Japanese hopology. He died early in the eighties.

Drew Fracher, Harrodsburg, Kentucky
Taped interview, March 1989.

Mr. Fracher's kindness, exactitude, and expertise shown clearly as he recorded his thoughts on stage combat during a long car trip. His stress on safety and upon the ethics and morality of fight direction were particularly insightful. Without his kind and energetic cooperation—along with many others among the leadership of SAFD—the completion of my doctoral dissertation in 1989 would not have been possible.



"HORSES, CANNONS, BLOOD BAGS GALORE, AND LOTS OF EPIC MUSIC"

No folks, it ain't Shakespeare. Nonetheless, outdoor drama has its own peculiar fascinations and rewards. A fight master speaks out in defense of a frequently maligned theatre form.

BY
DREW FRACHER

What is it about outdoor drama that makes it special to those of us in the fight business?

Certainly it's not the quality or historical accuracy of the scripts, many of which take license where none is deserved. Certainly it's not the lack of rehearsal time for the show, much less rehearsal time for the fights. Certainly it's not the fact that during rehearsals you have to face and compete with the elements, everything from rain, flash floods, biting cold and/or sweltering heat. Certainly it's not the wildlife, including all manner of animals and insects that thrive on human blood.

Why, then, even get involved? Perhaps the answer is—let's face it—people in the fight game (or for that matter,

people in the theatre) are all a little crazy. Besides, what a challenge!

Where else but in an outdoor drama do you get the opportunity to stage epic historical battles such as the Alamo, Tippecanoe or Boonesboro? Where else can you stage fights with, in some cases, over a hundred actor/combatants? Where else do you get the chance to work with a wide variety of weapons, pyrotechnics, high falls, water stunts and horses—all in the same battle scene? A challenge, to say the least.

No, folks, it ain't Shakespeare—not by any stretch of the imagination. It is, however, a great place to cut your teeth as an actor/combatant, fight captain or choreographer.

For a taste of just what you might

encounter in terms of action, following is a scenario of one battle you might be called on to stage or take part in. This is a rough outline of one of the battles from *Tecumseh!* The plot deals with Shawnee chief Tecumseh and the US forces, led by General William Henry Harrison.

Picture a huge mainstage with a sand surface flanked on either side by a two-to-three-story mountain. Upstage there is a small lake and behind it, another sand stage.

Army sentries are posted on the top and at the base of the mountain stage left. Soldiers at the base of the mountain are telling stories around a campfire. Three or four Indian braves silently swim the lake and emerge, knives in hand. One brave climbs the back side of the stage left mountain and, on cue, the Indians dispatch the sentries.

One hapless soldier stationed atop the mountain is stabbed in the back and pitched off the mountain in a high fall (landing on the fall pad positioned behind sight lines). The Shawnee "S.E.A.L.S." then signal a group of braves (about ten) who promptly cross upstage right to a ramp at the side of the house.

Here, the artillery is placed on a side stage. This consists of three practical five-inch cannons. As this attack commences, the soldiers finally realize they are under siege and general quarters is sounded.

A mass battle ensues with a large group (about 20 to 25) firing and hand-to-handing their way back down from side stage to main stage. More Indians enter. More soldiers do the same. Soon, approximately fifty combatants are engaged on and around the main stage.

During all this, artillery fires a total of nine volleys with nine reciprocal charges on the main stage, on the mountains and in the water. The cannon fire takes its toll on the Indians who bite the dust with a

few special flourishes, including an additional high fall (brave gets blown off stage right mountain), and a mini-tramp charge that explodes as an unwary brave hits it. He is propelled through the air and into the pond.

The general melee continues until a cavalry charge of mounted soldiers breaks through, cutting down stragglers before circling from the main stage up stage behind the pond to the village.

At the doomed village, the innocent are struck down and the little group of dwellings is put to the torch. Lights fade on the carnage and actors—soldiers, Indians and innocent victims alike—all scramble madly for the nearest exit.

All the preceding action takes place during a period of about three minutes. All told, about seventy-five actor/combatants are involved and approximately three pounds of black powder is fired.

Weapons used in this battle include something in the neighborhood of forty flintlock/blackpowder rifles and pistols, some fifty-odd knives and thirty or so tomahawks and war clubs. Horses, cannons, blood bags galore, and lots of epic music complete the picture.

"A great place to cut your teeth as an actor/combatant, fight captain, or choreographer."

Where else can you find such a staging and performing challenge in the live theatre?

I have one final observation on outdoor drama in general. Many folks in our realm frown on the genre and don't consider it a worthy endeavor.

It's true that, for the most part, the scripts aren't terrific, working conditions aren't the best, and the credit certainly isn't going to make or break anyone's resumé.

But, these shows do accomplish one thing that is *most* worthy and extremely important—they reach people who are *not* members of your basic theatre-going audience.

Many of these shows play to upwards of 25,000 people a season. Many people in those audiences have never seen a live theatrical performance before. Some of them carry home the knowledge that—who'd have thought it—there is an alternative to television. Perhaps live theatre will gain some new fans and supporters.

The several hundred thousand people that see these shows every season are bound to include some converts. This, in and of itself, is a compelling reason to lend our talents to making outdoor drama a better, safer, more exciting form of theatre.

Drew Fracher is a certified fight master and has choreographed, among many other productions, *Tecumseh!* and *The Legend of Daniel Boone*.



A scene from the 1986 production of *Tecumseh!* staged by Drew Fracher

GETTING A JOB IN OUTDOOR DRAMA

A number of outdoor dramas include some major fights or action:

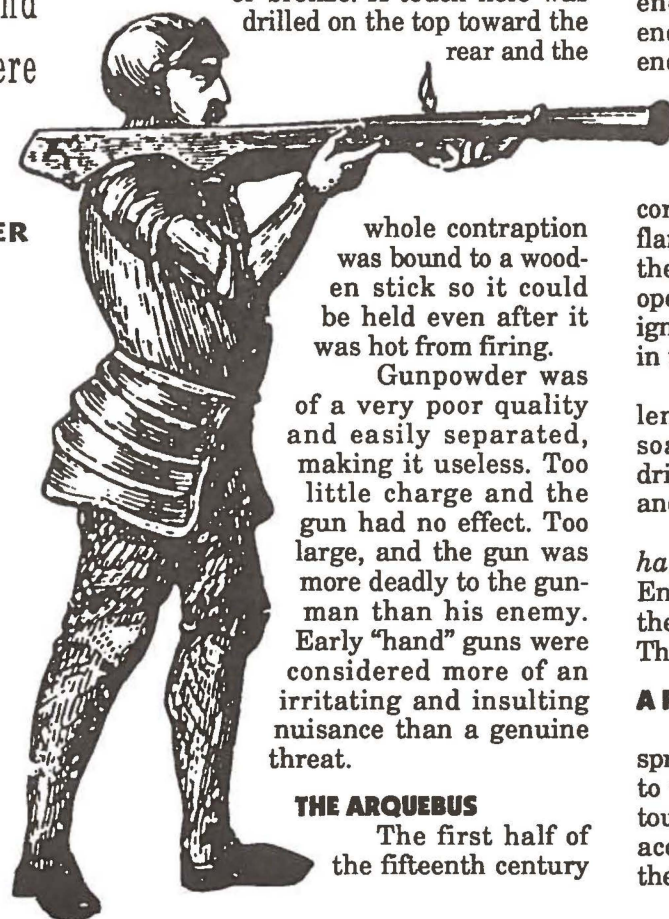
- ♦ *The Legend of Daniel Boone* ♦ *The Hatfields and the McCoy's*
Harrodsburg, Kentucky Beckley, West Virginia
- ♦ *Tecumseh!* ♦ *Blue Jacket*
Chillicothe, Ohio Xenia, Ohio
- ♦ *The Lost Colony*
Maneo, North Carolina

The Institute of Outdoor Drama in Chapel Hill, North Carolina holds auditions each Spring. In addition, most of these companies do some casting at the Southeastern Theatre Conference (SETC). Call the Institute at 919-962-1328 for further information.

"BUT FOR THOSE VILE GUNS, HE WOULD HIMSELF HAVE BEEN A SOLDIER."

Early firearms, from arquebus to matchlock and wheellock pistols, caused a total transformation in warfare. Knights in armor were on the wane and the arquebusiers, the musketeers, and the highwaymen were on the rise.

BY
RICHARD RAETHER



Hotspur ridicules the courtier who is both scornful and frightened of "those vile guns" in Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, but many noblemen felt the same way. The advent of the handgun meant that an armored knight on horseback could fall prey to a mud-spattered peasant, a novel and most unpleasant development for the knight.

Following is a brief look at how the transformation took place, along with some historical background on the early handguns and how they worked.

THE HAND CANNON

Cannons had been used in Europe since approximately 1320, primarily for siege warfare; the handgun made its first appearance about 1371. These were really hand-held cannons, with a barrel of iron or bronze. A touch hole was drilled on the top toward the rear and the

whole contraption was bound to a wooden stick so it could be held even after it was hot from firing.

Gunpowder was of a very poor quality and easily separated, making it useless. Too little charge and the gun had no effect. Too large, and the gun was more deadly to the gunman than his enemy. Early "hand" guns were considered more of an irritating and insulting nuisance than a genuine threat.

THE ARQUEBUS

The first half of the fifteenth century

saw significant improvements in handguns. A more effective gunpowder called "corned powder" was developed. A mixture of saltpeter, sulphur and charcoal was soaked in a solution of water and wine (or the preferred mixture of urine and wine—best of all, the urine of a wine-drinking bishop) and then dried. Improvements were also made in the stock and barrel that improved aim and absorbed recoil.

The most significant innovation came in Nuremberg in 1440—a firing mechanism called the serpentine, the earliest version of the matchlock. An s-shaped arm fastened with a center pivot to the right side of the stock, just behind the touchhole. One end of the arm curled back under the stock where the gunman held it with his right hand. The shorter end curled forward above the barrel, ending in a clamp that held the burning end of the match cord.

To fire the gun, the gunman simply pulled the long end of the Serpentine up, thus bringing the short arm with the burning match cord down onto the touchhole. To aid the flame in reaching the powder charge inside the barrel, the top of the touchhole was opened to hold extra powder that, once ignited, carried the spark to the charge in the barrel.

The match cord, or touche, was a length of twisted cord that had been soaked in a solution of saltpeter and dried, so that, when lit, it would smolder and burn slowly.

The Germans called this new gun a *hakenbuchse*, meaning hook gun. The English bastardized this to *hackbut*, and the French adopted the term *arquebus*. The latter became the accepted name.

A FLASH IN THE PAN

An expression that is still with us sprang up with the addition of a flashpan to the matchlock arquebus. By 1470 the touchhole moved to the side of the barrel accompanied by a flashpan which held the priming powder. Too much sediment

in the touchhole could keep the inner charge from igniting, producing a mere "flash in the pan." The flashpan had a hinged cover to protect the priming powder from rain and wind. To protect the gunman's eyes and face from the flash of the priming powder, a small partition called the *frye-shielde* was added.

The arquebus became a force to be reckoned with in battle.

On a calm, dry day a small arquebus could hit a card at 70 yards and kill a deer at 100 yards. Heavier versions could penetrate all but the thickest armor at 40 to 50 yards.

Armors flourished as knights suddenly saw the need for heavier armor and even the common soldier demanded a breastplate and helmet. Despite inconsistent gunpowder and the effects of weather, the arquebus had big advantages over the longbow and crossbow. The longbow took a lifetime of practice to master and the crossbow required years of training, but a simple peasant could master the arquebus in a couple of hours.

The new weapon spread quickly throughout Europe despite protests from nobles and knights who found themselves suddenly vulnerable to an ignominious death, being shot down by a common peasant.

France's most famous knight, the Chevalier Bayard ordered every captured arquebusier hanged. Unfortunately, no amount of highborn protest stopped the spread of the new weapon. On April 30, 1524, Bayard was shot and killed by an arquebus.

"PILLS OF HELL"

The arquebus was not just physically destructive, but a powerful psychological weapon as well. Many saw it as a kind of evil magic.

Unlike the arrow, which soared with the aid of feathers like an angel, the arquebus ball emerged from a sulphurous explosion and traveled unseen to strike down its prey. When the ball missed its target, men could

hear the devil's scream as the ball passed. Also, the wounds caused by these unholy "pills of hell" were devilish, smashing into flesh, shattering bones and lodging unseen to fester, infect and kill.

An arquebusier's equipment included the arquebus itself, weighing about ten pounds and measuring 56 inches, a flask of fine priming powder, another larger flask for

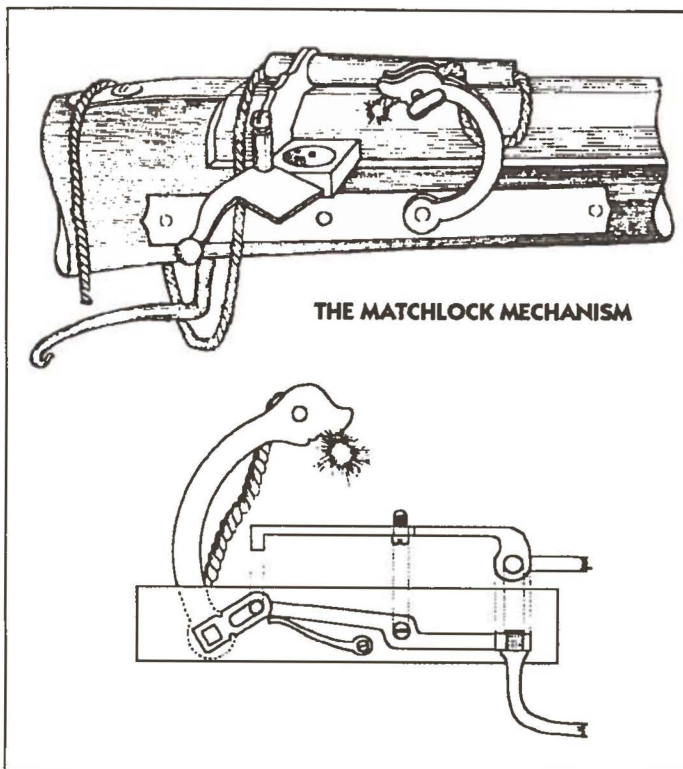
charge powder, two to three meters of match cord and a small bag of lead balls.

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, gunmen carried a string of small wooden vials on their bandoliers, each vial

containing a prepared powder charge to speed up loading in battle.

The hazard posed by wind is easily understood if you imagine yourself with a lit fuse in your left hand, small vials of gunpowder strapped across your chest, while you pour gunpowder from a horn into the arquebus with your right hand. There are recorded cases of careless gunmen who literally blew themselves up with their own match cord.





the spring-loaded wheel clockwise about a three-quarter turn until it caught.

Next, the gunman opened the flashpan by pushing its cover forward with his thumb, primed the flashpan, and pushed a button which snapped the flashpan's cover back in place. Now the "dog" or cock (a swinging arm which held a piece of pyrite in its vise jaws) was lowered so that it pressed down on the flashpan cover.

The weapon was now loaded,

primed, and ready to shoot.

To fire, the gunman had merely to pull the trigger, which released the wheel to spin, the flashpan cover snapped open, the pyrites dropped into the flashpan making contact with the spinning wheel, creating sparks. The sparks ignited the priming powder, which flashed through the touch-hole, igniting

the charge and firing the bullet.

For the first time, a gun could be carried on one's person, loaded, primed and ready to shoot. This led to the introduction of a whole new breed of weapon, the pistol.

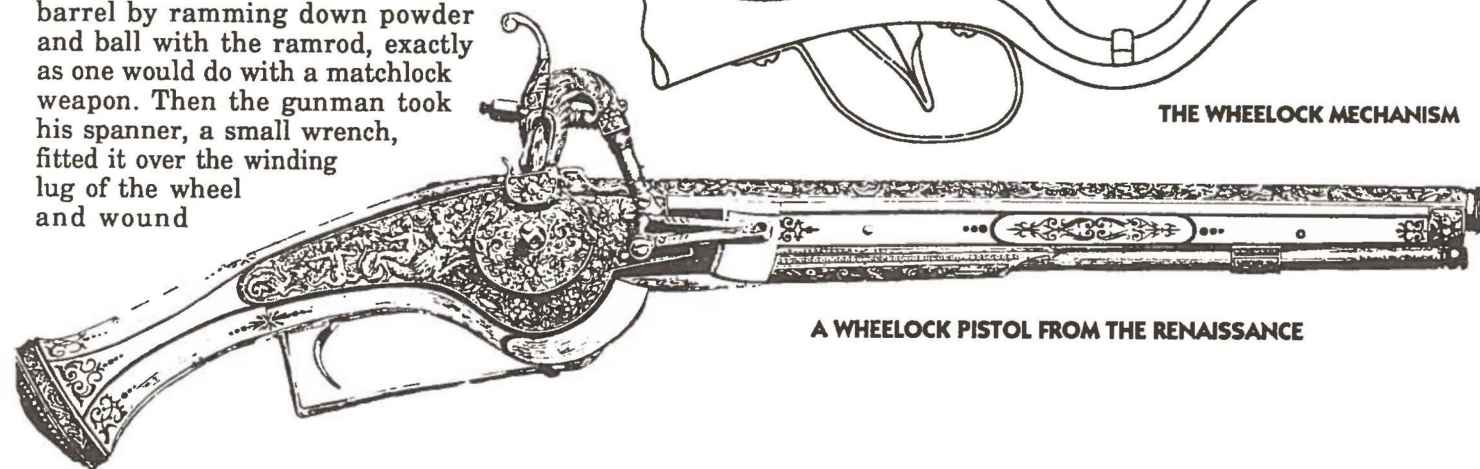
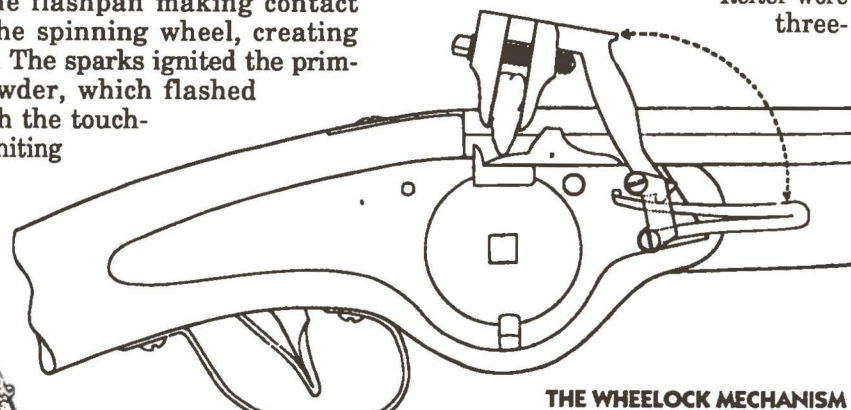
THE PISTOL

The pistol was (possibly) named for the Italian town of Pistoia, an early gun-making center. Or, it may have come from the Czech word "pistala" meaning small handgun.

Pistols ranged from massive horse pistols, 2 to 3 feet long, to the murderous pocket pistol. While the wheellock was an ideal firing mechanism for one-handed firearms, it was too expensive to entirely replace the matchlock, and both systems were used until replaced by the flintlock.

The Dragoons took their name from an early matchlock pistol called the Dragon. Dragoons were famed for riding to within range, dismounting, priming their guns and firing. With the advent of the wheellock, the regiment quickly switched to the new firing mechanism that could be fired from horseback.

Mounted German mercenaries known as the Reiters also gained fame with their wheellock pistols. A Reiter wore three-



THE WHEELLOCK

Leonardo da Vinci invented the wheellock firing mechanism for the Duke of Milano in approximately 1483—his drawings still exist. But for some reason, his mechanism was never manufactured.

The first functioning wheellock was made in Nuremberg in 1515. This firing mechanism produced sparks by holding an iron pyrite against the notched edge of a spinning wheel, which extended into the bottom of the priming pan.

To prepare a wheellock gun for firing, the gunman first loaded the barrel by ramming down powder and ball with the ramrod, exactly as one would do with a matchlock weapon. Then the gunman took his spanner, a small wrench, fitted it over the winding lug of the wheel and wound

quarter armor, carried a rapier, lance, and between two and four pistols carried in saddle pipes suspended from the saddle horn.

Their tactics were to form three lines. The first line would charge to within range, fire, wheel their horses off to the flank and back to reload as the second line charged. These tactics were devastating to a line of pikemen, but became outmoded once the Reiters found themselves charging foot soldiers armed with matchlock muskets that could cut them down long before the Reiters came within pistol range.

THE FIRST SATURDAY-NIGHT-SPECIAL

The small, easily-concealed wheellock pistol was the ideal weapon for robbery, murder and assassination. So much so that, in 1518, Maximilian I prohibited the manufacture and use of the things within the Holy Roman Empire.

The wheellock remained primarily a personal weapon of the wealthy, while the military relied upon the cheaper matchlock guns in increasing numbers. By 1552, matchlock arquebusiers made up over thirty percent of Henry II's troops.

Arquebus was always a catch-all term covering a wide array of gun designs and sizes. Eventually use of the term dwindled to refer specifically to a lightweight hunting gun.

During the 1560s a new type of firearms emerged, the musket.

THE MUSKET

The very mention of Dumas' *The Three Musketeers* calls to mind dazzling swordplay at the drop of a plumed hat, but it is often forgotten that musketeers took their name from the fact that they were an elite regiment of gunmen. Knights won their spurs when they achieved knighthood, but it is a musket that D'artagnan is endeavoring to earn.

The musket originated in Spain, but spread rapidly to become the

primary military firearm throughout Europe. The early musket was around five feet, ten inches long, weighed 15 to 20 pounds, fired a 10 or 11 bore ball (.80 to .92 calibre) and was supported by a forked rest. The awesome power of the musket could accurately pierce any armor at a distance of up to 125 yards and could kill man or beast at 200 yards.

In addition to the enormous gun and forked rest, the musketeer, like the arquebusier who preceded him, carried two powder flasks—one for priming powder and one for propellant powder, over a dozen cartridges suspended from his bandolier, a bullet pouch and half a dozen four-foot lengths of match cord.

The complex manipulation of all these accouterments in battle seems incredible to us now, but a seasoned musketeer could fire two well-aimed shots every three minutes.

THE CALIVER

A lighter, less cumbersome alternative to the musket that developed about the same time was the caliver. The caliver was about four feet long, weighed 10 to 12 pounds and fired a 10 or 11 bore ball (.76 to .79 calibre).

THE SCHNAPPAHNN

The next significant innovations were prompted more by the continuing search for a better hunting weapon that would be cheaper than a wheellock, than for any military need.

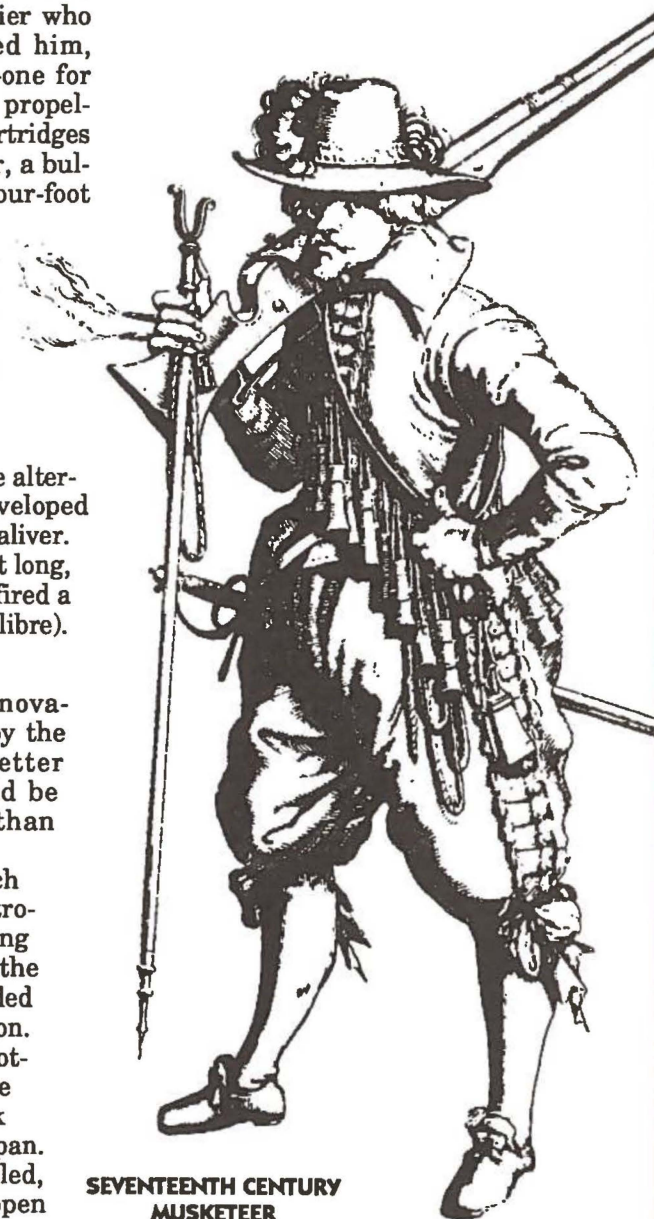
The Schnapphahn—Dutch for Pecking Rooster—was introduced about 1587. After loading and priming a schnapphahn, the gunman pulled the spring-loaded "cock" back to the ready position. The battery, or frizzen, a pivoting steel arm with a flat plate on the end, was brought back into place just above the flashpan.

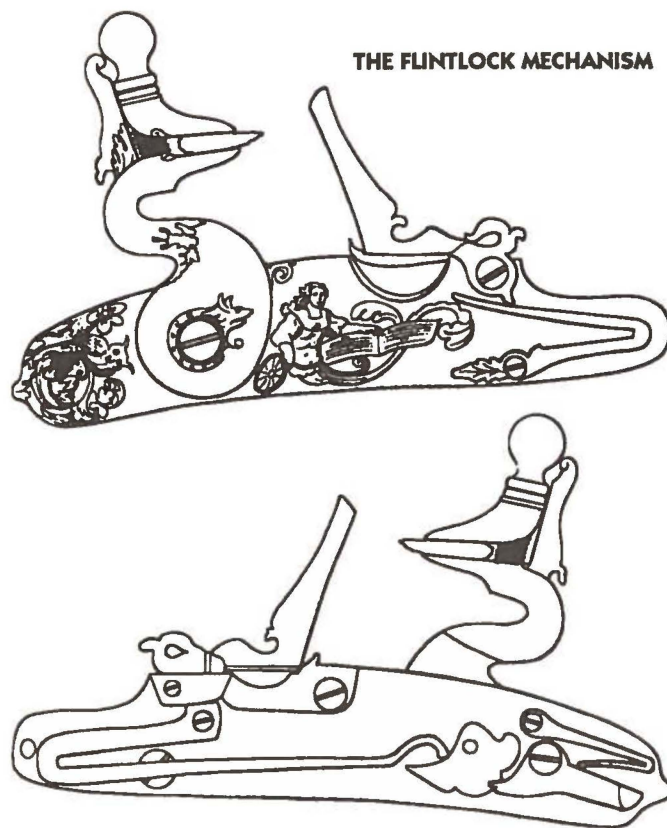
When the trigger was pulled, the flashpan cover snapped open

as the cock came down and struck the battery, causing a shower of sparks to fall into the flashpan and fire the gun. The schnapphahn proved to be efficient and cheap, about a quarter of the cost of the wheellock.

THE MIQUELET

At the same time, another firing mechanism was introduced called the Spanish lock or miquelet. The miquelet was important because it combined the battery with the flashpan cover in a single L-shaped arm. When the cock struck the batter, it snapped the battery back exposing the flashpan to the resulting sparks.





ARMOR DEPARTS

As firepower grew more deadly and unstoppable, heavy armor lost any advantage it had once held and began disappearing from battlefields. As this occurred, the heavy muskets began paring down until, by 1659, a shorter, more manageable firearm became standard.

Despite advances in guncraft, it wasn't until well into the 1670s that European armies began replacing matchlocks with schnapphahn, miquelet, or flintlock weapons. The peasantry continued to use matchlocks well into the eighteenth century.

The father of the flintlock, the miquelet was the most effective, economical firing device for nearly 200 years, until the finely crafted flintlock of the mid-1700s.

THE JACOBAN FLINTLOCK

Between 1620 and 1630, English gunsmiths combined the interior spring of the Schnapphahn and the combined battery-flashpan cover of the miquelet and invented the English lock, more commonly known as the Jacobean flintlock. The flintlock was steadily improved and, with the introduction of the Brown Bess in 1712, became the dominant firearm of Europe.

GOING OFF HALF-COCKED

There was much ridicule heaped on the early flintlocks, as they were noted for being unreliable, giving rise to an expression which was meant quite literally—a wise man was careful of his aim while loading and cocking, as flintlocks often literally fired halfway through the process.

GUN CONTROL

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, handguns had proven so effective that many Englishmen abandoned their daily longbow practice and began hunting with guns. This terrified Henry VII whose military victories had been achieved through the deadly accuracy of English bowmen.

To prevent that accuracy from being lost, a 1508 Act of Parliament forbade the use of guns without royal patent or special license. The law was blithely ignored and the longbow fell further into disuse.

In 1511, it was decreed that every Englishman under the age of forty be required to provide himself with bow and arrows and practice daily, under pain of heavy fines.

The new law was no more successful than the previous. In 1515, Parliament passed a new law barring anyone with a yearly income of less than £200 from owning a handgun. The penalty was confiscation of the weapon and a £10 fine. To enforce the law, Parliament granted everyone with an annual income over £200 the right to confiscate and keep any illegal weapons, plus half the fine.

By 1540, this law too, proved unenforceable due largely to the need for self-defense. The country was now riddled with highwaymen and bandits armed with handguns.

In 1542, Parliament enacted a law which permitted anyone with income of £100 a year to own and use firearms. It also limited hunting to those who obtained a license (at £20 per year) stating what type of game they were permitted to shoot. Hunting seasons were established. In recognition of dangers faced, all those dwelling near the seacoast or the Scottish border were allowed to own and practice with guns.

This law also failed, prompting yet another law in 1549. But no law restrained English peasants from shooting their dinner.

Henry VIII was the first English monarch to heartily embrace guns. He imported firearms from Italy, France and Germany, amassing a large collection of hunting guns. His affection for guns finally made them fashionable.

"A LEGION OF CAESARS"

With the development of firearms and the passing of armored knights, a new breed of warrior arose who wielded a gun as well as a sword. And new legends sprang up to tell of them.

It is D'artagnan's father who calls the musketeers "a legion of Caesars, whom the king holds in great esteem and whom the cardinal dreads," thus inspiring his son to journey to Paris and join them. So contempt for "those vile guns" had changed to respect, mingled with both fear and admiration.

Richard Raether is a fight master and an adjunct professor of theater at the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee's Professional Training Program.

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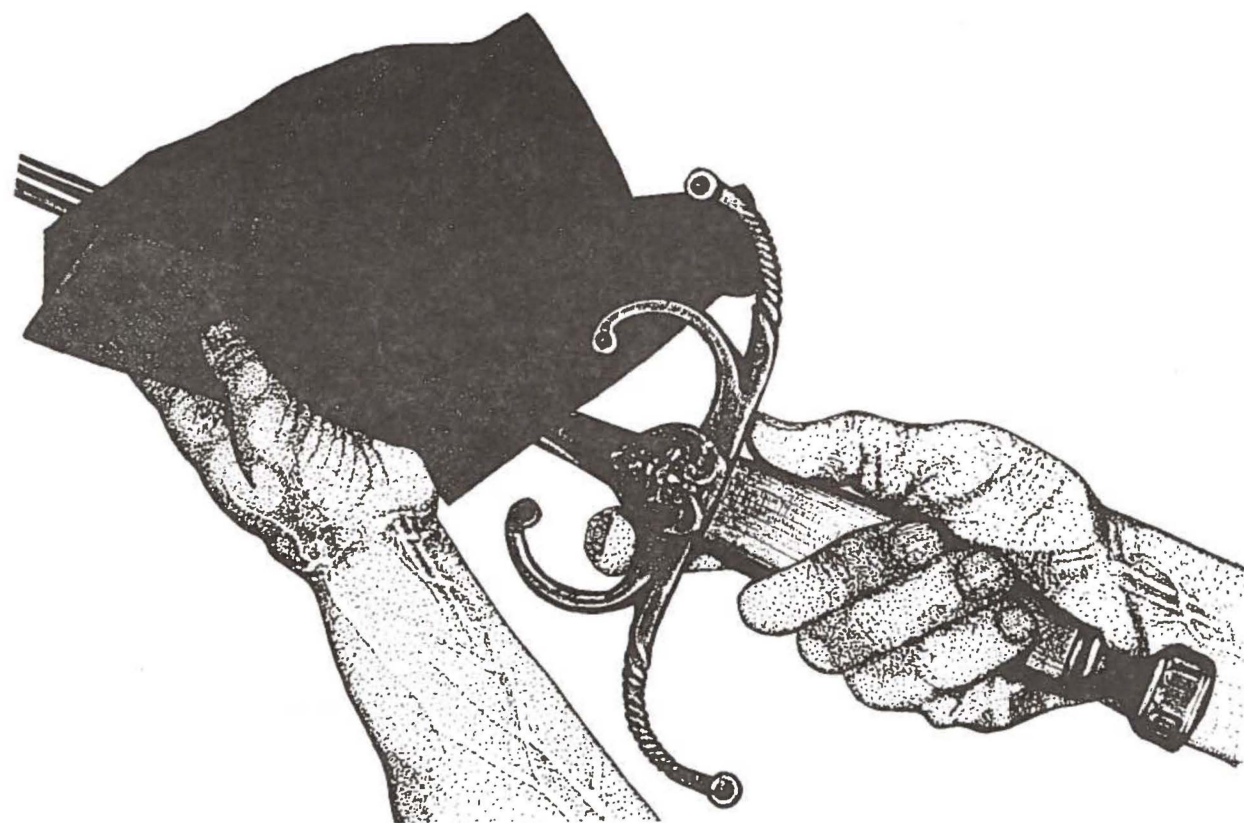


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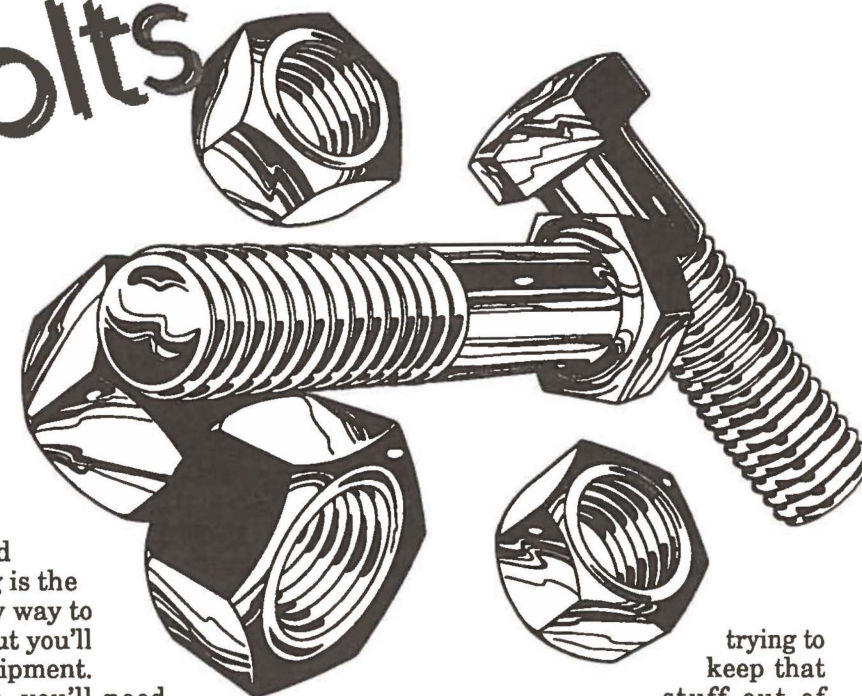
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Nuts & Bolts

Polishing Your Sword
by Dexter Fidler



The Nuts & Bolts department of the Fight Master focuses on practical how-to considerations of stage combat.

"Oh, Keep up your bright swords, for the dew will rust them."

Othello, Act I, Scene 2

Beyond the basic elegance of a well-designed sword, one of the surest ways to catch an audience's eye is a highly polished hilt. People are attracted to bright, shiny objects, much like vultures to the eyes of carrion. Sorry, just had to make the analogy. With hilt polishing, you have two options. Hire it done, or do it yourself.

The advantages of ordering a new sword polished, or having an existing sword polished, are obvious. No mess for you, plus you know the sword cutler is trained and has the best equipment for the job. The disadvantages are, of course, financial.

The fee for polishing a rapier hilt can be around \$24-\$36, possibly more if it's a fully "tricked out" hilt from Dennis Graves or Rod Casteel. Of course, after your initial investment, only a small amount of maintenance is necessary to keep that shine bright.

If you want to save money, or if you're just a do-it-yourself type, you can tackle the job yourself. You've got two choices—speed polishing or hand polishing. We'll cover speed polishing first, and deal with blade polishing after that.

Speed polishing is the fast, easy way to polish, but you'll need equipment.

First, you'll need access to a bench grinder mounted with cotton buffing wheels. You'll also need rouge for the wheels. While we use stainless steel rouge at American Fencers, other types of cut and color rouges will also work. Figure about one stick of rouge for each weapon, but an extra stick for touch-up wouldn't be a bad idea.

The bench grinder should have anywhere from a 1/2 hp to a 1 1/2 hp motor, mounted solidly on a work bench in a well ventilated area.

Before you begin to polish, safety precautions must be taken. Protecting your eyes is a must. A full face shield is best, although safety goggles will do in a pinch. I prefer wearing safety goggles underneath the face shield. It helps keep dust down to a minimum.

Heavy work gloves will protect the hands. A cloth or leather work apron or coveralls will keep most of the rouge off of your clothes. Did I mention that this is messy work? Don't plan any auditions immediately following—you'll have black stuff all over your face and hair (be sure to clean your ears).

A dust mask is essential for your health. Cotton dust masks will do if you polish maybe once a year, but a cartridge respirator is best at filtering dust and fumes. Remember all that black stuff on your face? We're

trying to keep that stuff out of your lungs. If you're planning on polishing on any consistent basis, then you definitely need to invest in a respirator. Shiny swords are nice, but they're not worth your lungs.

A hat or bandanna will keep some black stuff out of your hair. One last big safety note: **NO "DANGLIES."** Anything hanging from you or your clothes could get sucked into the buffing wheel and wound around at 3600 RPM, pulling you in with it. Double check apron straps, glove closures, bandannas, etc. If you have long hair, tie it back and tuck it down your shirt.

Once you're suited up and ready to polish, disassemble your sword. Modern swords will unscrew at the pommel. If you have a top-nut on the pommel (I think most Dennis Graves swords do.) remove it. Screw the pommel back on the bare blade. It's easiest to polish the pommel by holding onto the tang of the blade rather than trying to hold onto the pommel as you polish.

You'll want one last piece of equipment—a spray bottle full of water. As you polish, the hilt will heat up, sometimes rather quickly. Spray it with water to keep it cool enough to handle.

Now you're ready. Turn on the grinder and, holding the rouge tightly, with both hands, apply a small amount

Nuts & Bolts

to the spinning buffing wheels. The force of the wheel can knock it from your hand, so hold tight. If you have a two-piece hilt assembly (guard and quillon), take the guard first. Holding tightly with both hands, press it against the wheel. Hard enough to do the polish, but not too hard or you'll slow the machine down.

Start with a nice simple area of the guard so you can see the polish coming out and get an idea of what kind of polish you want—a quick buff just to bring out the shine, or the mirror-polish look? Work in sections, completing one section, then moving on. This will help keep the polish consistent over the entire hilt.

You'll need to re-apply the rouge fairly frequently. When you press the hilt to the wheel and can't see any change, you need more rouge. Try not to apply too much rouge, or you'll just leave the extra on you and the floor when you hit the guard to the wheel. Spritz the hilt piece with water as you feel it heat up. Be careful—some pieces (especially aluminum) can heat up very quickly.

With the inevitable nooks and

crannies of a hilt, another word of caution: NEVER polish "edge up." The wheel can get caught in one of those nooks. This is the surest way to have your buffing wheel grab the piece and throw it across the room, or, more likely—since you'll be close to the buffer—into your sternum. I learned this one the hard way.

If you do get hit while polishing, turn off the machine and step away. Check for damage. If you think you need first aid, by all means, get it. When polishing, whatever you do—don't rush. The sword can wait.

When polishing the pommel, hold the tang so the force of the wheel tightens the pommel down. Hold the tang wrong and the buffing wheel will spin the pommel off the tang. The pommel will then go spinning off across the floor.

Spritz the pommel with water often. The pommel will retain a lot of heat unless you keep it cool from the start of your polish.

When you're done polishing the hilt, turn off the machine. Wait 'til the wheel stops spinning, then take off the eye protection (nice and dirty

by this point) and examine the hilt. Now go back and touch up all the spots you missed. If you like, mark the spots with a felt tip pen so that you can get them all the second try. It's better than taking off your gear, cleaning up, and then realizing you missed a place on the guard. I learned this the hard way too.

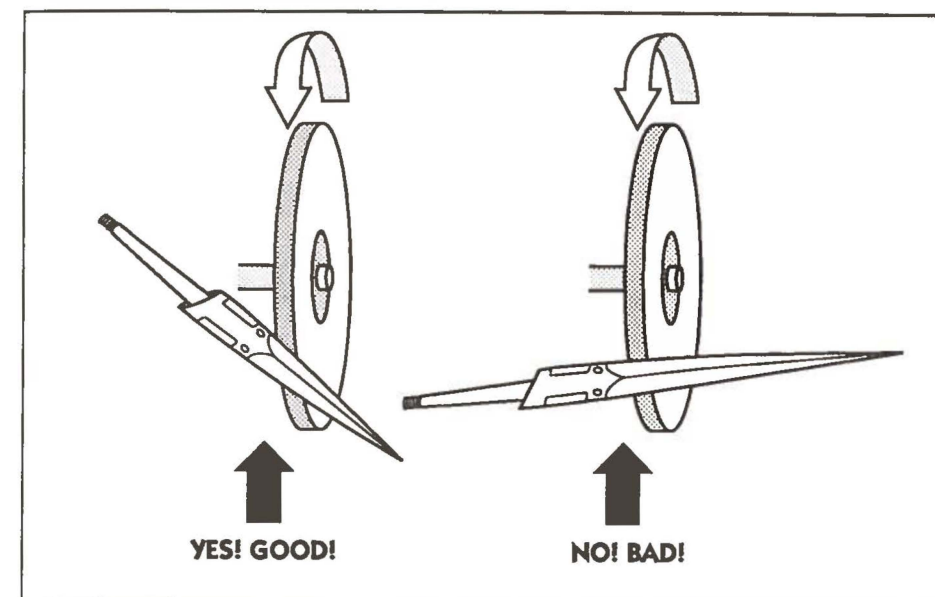
A full rapier hilt will take about an hour to polish and about a stick of rouge. This time will lessen as you became more proficient at polishing. Remember, the polish will never be absolutely perfect. There's always a spot the buffing wheel can't reach, or even an imperfection inherent in the metal. Remember, the audience will never notice that spot.

Once you're done polishing, wipe the excess rouge from the hilt and treat the metal. Historical arms wax or a metal polish like Brasso or Simichrome will help slow the oxidation process. You can't totally stop oxidation, but you can slow it down. A silicon gun cloth (check gun stores) is another good way to help maintain your polish. If your sword does turn dull, don't fear—the polish is still there underneath. Ten minutes on the buffer will bring the shine back—another advantage of a polished weapon. Once a weapon is polished, you can always repolish it very quickly.

Now let's talk blades. Speed polishing blades is always an iffy proposition. Blades are tough to hang onto, particularly épée and musketeer blades. And since the friction from the spinning wheel heats the blade up fast, you have to be very careful to keep the blade cool or you run the risk of ruining the temper of the blade, resulting in a warped or kinked blade. If you do speed polish a blade, work from the forte of the blade toward the foible. As with hilts, never polish edge up.

As you near the middle of the blade (particularly épée and musketeer blades) keep the blade on a near parallel to the buffing wheel. If the foible is perpendicular to the wheel, it's guaranteed the wheel will grab the blade out of your hand and try to throw it.

Remember, we're talking about working theatrical blades, not showpieces. A little shine on the blade is fine for the audience. An attempt to



mirror-polish a blade just wastes time and energy on a blade that's going to get nicked up anyway.

Other than these cautionary notes, blade polishing is really the same as hilt polishing. Remember, blades are high carbon steel and will rust quickly. Once you're done polishing the blade, dry off all of the water from the spritz bottle.

Now, if you don't have access to a bench grinder, you can still do a respectable polish by hand. This is a method that I picked up from custom knifemakers. It's not difficult, but it is time-consuming.

For supplies, you'll need several grits of sandpaper, starting with 120 grit or equivalent emery paper. You will want a few sheets each of 120, 220, 320, 400, and 600 grit papers. How far you go with this method depends on how much of a perfectionist you are, how much patience you have, and how insane you are.

The nice thing about this method is that it can be accomplished over a long period of time without the hilt looking bad or "unfinished".

Our shop manager jokes about polishing being the art of "getting all the scratches going in the same

direction." That's actually somewhat close to the truth.

Start with the 120 grit paper; cut a sheet into fourths. Now take one of the fourths, and fold it into fourths. Sand the hilt with the 120 grit until the hilt is all the same smoothness.

Like speed polishing, work in sections. Try to sand in the same direction. This is the toughest step. The 120 grit will take the longest of all the grits. Be patient and try not to move to the next grit prematurely. Any scratches you don't get out now with the 120 will be there forever.

Don't feel bad about working on the hilt for awhile and then walking away from it for a longer while. You have to be slightly insane to try this method, and we don't want to push you over the edge.

Once you're satisfied with the 120 grit, move on to the 220. Work in a different direction from the 120, either perpendicular or diagonal. This keeps sediment from filling up the 120 grit scratches and trick you into thinking they're gone, only to reappear at the 600 grit stage.

So, use the same method with the 220. Get all of the surface to the

220 grit smoothness, then move to 320 grit, again working a different direction from the 220. All the steps are the same from here out. Get the surface uniform, then new grit, different direction. Remember, I told you this would take awhile.

You won't get the same kind of shine from this as you do from speed polishing, even though you're actually making the surface smoother than speed polishing does.

Once you've finished the 600 grit (or you've thrown in the towel) wipe any sediment from the hilt. Now apply either a brass or metal polish. This will start to give you a bit of a gleam. Successive applications will improve this a bit more.

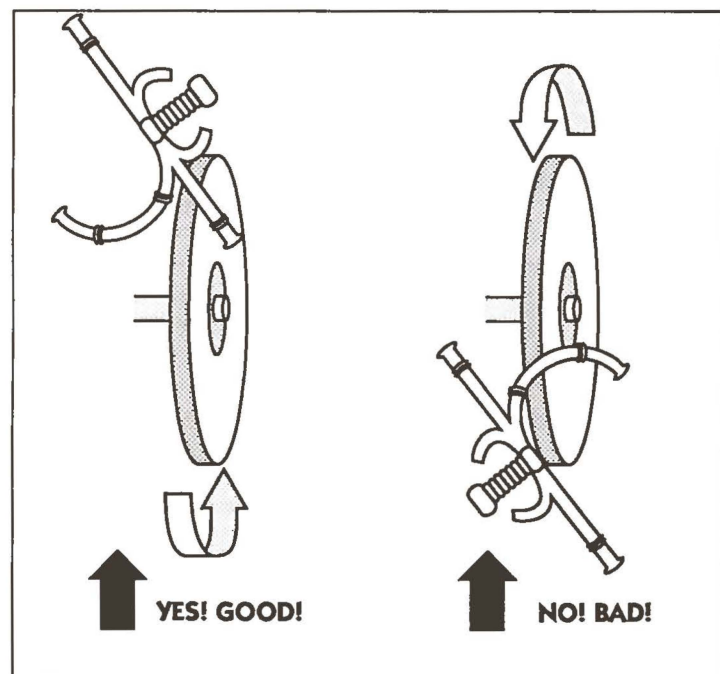
One note: if you have a steel hilt, you may be able to skip the 120 grit and go straight to the 220 stage. Like I said, this process isn't difficult, just time-consuming. This method can also be used on blades, although I'm not sure I'd go past 320 grit for a "working" blade. For a super shine on blades or hilts, hand-sand first, then speed-polish. Beautiful!

Once you're done polishing blade and hilt, re-assemble the weapon, being careful not to over-tighten (Dennis Graves had an excellent article on assembling weapons a few years back). Voila! Now you'll be the envy of all your friends.

If, after reading this, you decide polishing is not for you, give a call to American Fencers (415) 863-7911 or FAX us (415) 431-4931 for a quote on polishing your weapon for you.

Dexter Fidler is a certified teacher in the SAFD and is employed at the Armory, a division of American Fencers Supply.

Illustrations by Gene Ching at American Fencers.



BY
MARGARET
RAETHER

Film Fights

WESTERN FIST-FIGHTS

Smile when you say that, pardner. When it comes time to duke it out, certain westerns emerge from the dust-up as the all-time champeens. Here's a look at my personal favorite western fist-fights. So saddle up and return with us now to those golden days of yesteryear. . .

The Spoilers

1914, 1922
1930 Paramount Director: Edwin Carewe
1942 Universal Director: Ray Enright
1955 Universal Director: Jesse Hibbs

Pick your favorite of the five (so far) versions. The legendary movie fight of all time began in 1914 when William Farnum and Tom Santschi battled for a full reel and began a legend. Milton Sills and Noah Beery tackled the first remake in 1922. When the first talkie version was made by Paramount in 1930, Farnum and Santschi were hired to advise William Boyd and Gary Cooper on restaging the famous battle. Cover art for this issue of the *Fight Master* was based on their fight. A worthy effort, but the best is yet to come.

In 1942, John Wayne and Randolph Scott demolish most of the saloon before spilling out into the deep mud of the Klondike mining town that is the story's setting. Their encounter is a definitive film classic.

The Spoilers was remade again in 1955, this time in color, starring Jeff Chandler and Rory Calhoun. It doesn't carry the clout of the earlier versions, but the fight is still big and very muddy.

1930 version, 81 minutes. Black & White. Not available on video
1942 version, 87 minutes. Black & White. Available on video
1955 version, 84 minutes. Black & White. Not available on video

Destry Rides Again

1939 Universal
Director: George Marshall

Why let the men have all the fun? *Destry Rides Again* was Tom Mix's first talkie in 1932 and remade with Audie Murphy in the 50s, but the only version that counts is the 1939 classic with a youthful James Stewart in the title role and an unforgettable Marlene Dietrich as Frenchie, the sexy saloon singer who growls out "See What the Boys in the Back Room Will Have."

Dietrich had been dumped by Paramount two years previously and was widely considered washed up. Along with Kate Hepburn, she'd been branded "box office poison" by movie distributors. In this film, she proved them wrong.

When respectable townswoman Una Merkel angrily denounces Frenchie for (literally) winning the pants off Merkel's husband in a poker game, a violent catfight erupts. Both actresses refused a double, and punched, pulled hair, wrestled, kicked, and rolled on the floor until they were drenched with water by Stewart. The fight took five days to film, and though it lasts just two minutes on the screen, it forever changed Marlene's icy, remote image.

Fun Film Trivia: Not everyone was pleased with the sexy humor in the film. The Hays Office, in charge of maintaining decency in films, permitted Dietrich to tuck her poker money into her cleavage, but censored her line, "Thar's gold in them thar hills."

94 minutes. Black & White.
Available on video

Dodge City

1939 Warner Brothers
Director: Michael Curtiz

If you thought that all those western saloon brawls really look pretty much alike, you're right.

The monster saloon brawl for which Errol Flynn's first western is famous has appeared as stock footage in many other westerns.

105 minutes.
Color. Not available on video

Red River

1948 UA
Director: Howard Hawks
Academy Award Nomination: Best Screenplay

John Wayne made the leap from "B" movie star to "A" movies in the John Ford classic *Stagecoach*, but it was this epic film about a massive cattle drive that made Marian Michael Morrison (John Wayne) a major star.

The story revolves around the love/hate relationship between two men—cattleman Tom Dunson (Wayne), the ruthless leader of the drive who disciplines his men with a bullwhip, and orphaned Matthew Garth (Montgomery Clift in a star-making debut), whom Dunson has raised. Garth ultimately rebels against Dunson's methods and ousts him as leader of the drive. The film is often called the western *Mutiny on the Bounty*, the main difference being that the two leads, after a furious climactic fist-fight in Abilene, end up reconciling.

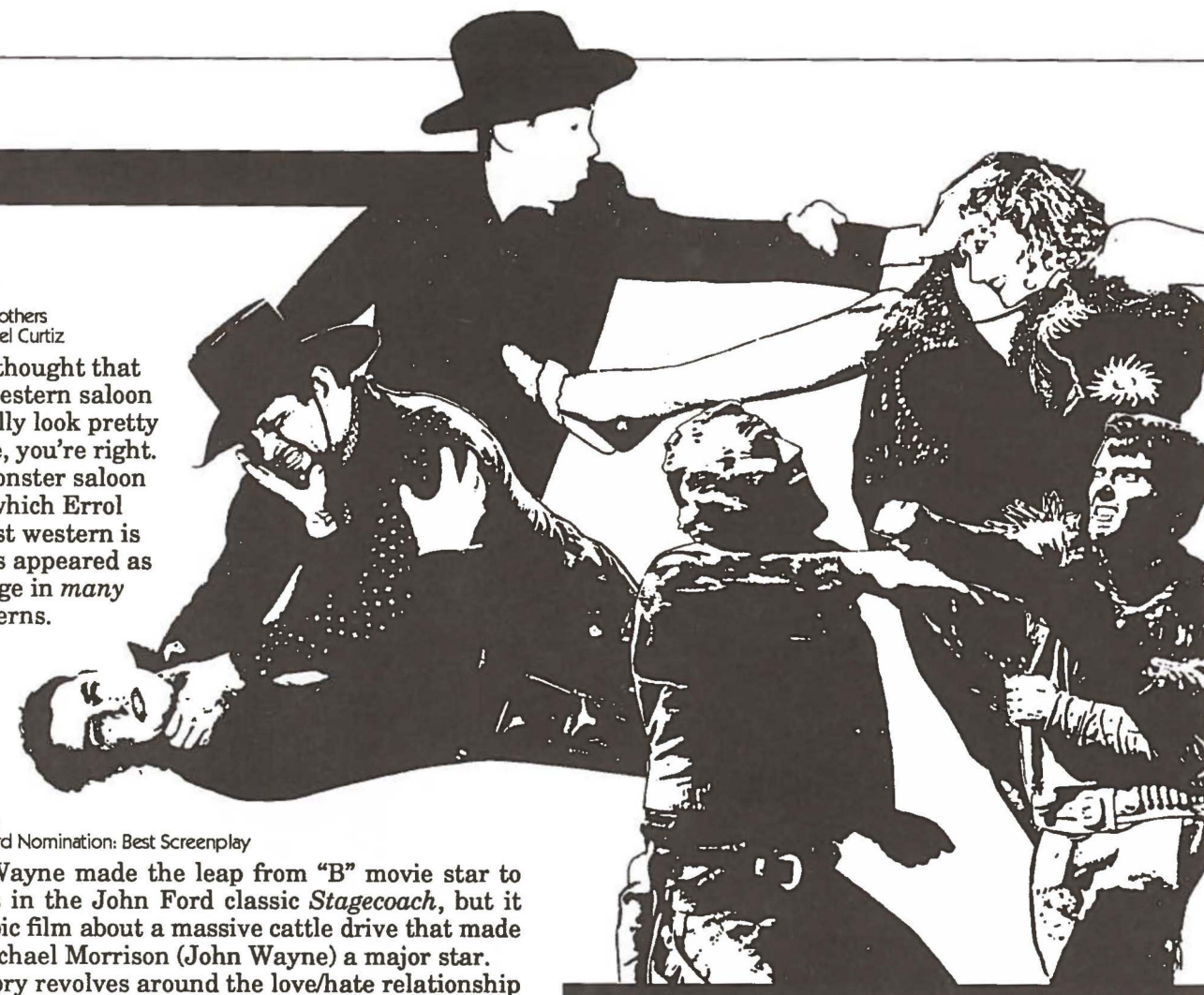
125 minutes. Black and White. Available on video

Shane

1953 Paramount
Director: George Stevens
Academy Award: Best Cinematography
Academy Award Nominations: Best Picture, Director, Screenplay, Supporting Actor (for both Jack Palance and Brandon De Wilde)

Everyone remembers the climactic shoot-out, but it is the splendid fist-fight earlier in the film that lands it in this column. Shane, a mysterious stranger, hires on with a peaceful family of homesteaders. When Shane orders soda-pop in the town saloon, planning to give it to young Brandon De Wilde, it provides the excuse for local cowhands to pick a fight with the new "pig farmer."

Fun Film Trivia: The final scene in which wounded Shane explains to Joey why he must leave ("There's no living with a killing.") was a moving moment for everyone involved except little Brandon. Every time Ladd spoke his beautiful lines of farewell, Brandon crossed his eyes



and stuck out his tongue, until finally Ladd called to the boy's father, "Make that kid stop or I'll beat him over the head with a brick!" De Wilde was made to behave and Shane rode off into movie history.

118 minutes. Color. Available on video

Giant

1956 Warner Brothers
Director: George Stevens
Academy Award: Best Director
Academy Award Nominations: Best Supporting Actor for James Dean and Best Supporting Actress for Mercedes McCambridge

Filmed in Arizona because the producers couldn't find any place in Texas that they thought looked like Texas, the cowboys ride in limos instead of on horses in this empire-building saga of cattle and oil tycoons. James Dean gives an electric performance in a role originally intended for Alan Ladd, and although there was apparently plenty of hostility between James Dean and Rock Hudson on the set, onscreen it is a relatively minor player who gets to do the big fight with Hudson.

Spanning twenty years and clocking in at nearly three and a half hours, the soap opera elements can get pretty soggy, but the dandy brawl between the bigoted owner of a diner and Rock Hudson is a must-see and, by itself, merits *Giant's* inclusion in this column.

201 minutes. Color. Available on video

Film Fights

Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid

1969 20th Century Fox
Director: George Roy Hill
Academy Awards: Best Screenplay, Best Score,
Best Cinematography
Academy Award Nominations: Best Picture, Best
Director

The film begins with the disclaimer, "Not that it matters, but most of what follows is true." As a matter of fact, it is. Butch and Sundance were two of the most successful and delightful outlaws of the west. The one liberty screenwriter William Goldman took with the facts is their ignominious death in Bolivia. Most historians believe now that their death was a rumor spread by Butch and Sundance themselves to get the law off their backs. The Sundance Kid is thought to have rejoined Etta Place and lived quietly in Wyoming until 1956.

Meanwhile, Butch enjoyed his ill-gotten gains happily until he finally ended his days peacefully in a nursing home in Washington state in 1937, under a false name. It couldn't have happened to two nicer outlaws.

But enough history and onto the fight. This film gets the credit for the shortest, most memorable unarmed fight in Hollywood westerns. I am referring to Butch Cassidy's confrontation with enormous Ted Cassidy (Lurch of *Addams Family* fame) who challenges Butch's leadership of the Hole-in-the-Wall gang. I won't spoil it for those who haven't seen it. Once seen, it's not soon forgotten.

112 minutes. Color. Available on video.

REFERENCES

The Movies, by Richard Griffith and Arthur Mayer
Western Films, by Brian Garfield
The Life and Times of the Western Movie, Jay Hyams
A Pictorial History of Westerns,
by Michael Parkinson and Clyde Jeavons
Rating the Movies, editors of Consumer Guide and
Jay A. Brown

■ Margaret Raether is Editor of the *Fight Master* and a long-time film buff. When playing the Silver Screen edition of Trivial Pursuit, she always wins. Nobody will play with her any more...

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the pen & the sword

In the Fall 1991 *Fight Master*, "The Pen and the Sword" will look at the following three books:

Weapons in the Theatre

Arthur Wise
New York: Barnes and Noble, 1968

The Book of the Sword

Sir Richard Burton
London: Chatto and Windus, 1884
[reprinted, New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 1972.]

The Theatre Student:

Stage Violence

Albert M. Katz
New York: Richards Rosen Press, Inc.,
1976.

Reviews should be completed by
August 15, 1991 and forwarded to:

Dale Anthony Girard
P.O. Box 18954
Denver, CO 80218

The opinions expressed in this column are those of the reviewer(s) and may not reflect the opinion of the Society of American Fight Directors. "The Pen and the Sword" is an open review column expressly designed to allow members of the SAFD to voice their opinions. All members are encouraged to share their insights and time-earned discoveries concerning written material on (or related to) the art of stage combat.

Each issue will list three books to be reviewed, along with a deadline. All opinions are welcome and will be considered for publication in this column. Contributing writers will be credited in each review. It is hoped that "The Pen and the Sword" will serve as a valuable companion to independent study and an open invitation for all SAFD members to participate in the SAFD's growth and development.

BY DALE
ANTHONY GIRARD

THIS ISSUE: SAFD MEMBERS VOICE THEIR VIEWS ON ROBERT BALDICK'S *THE DUEL*, E.D. MORTON'S *MARTINI A-Z OF FENCING*, AND C. TURNER AND T. SOPER'S *METHODS AND PRACTICE OF ELIZABETHAN SWORDPLAY*.

THE DUEL

by Robert Baldick

London: Chapman and Hall, 1965.
[reprinted London: The Hamlyn Publishing Group Limited, 1970.] ISBN 0 600 32837 6.

Hardcover, Pp. 212 (Pp. 203 text, p. 1 bibliography, Pp. 8 index).

98 illustrations (47 B&W plates, 43 line drawings, 8 engravings). Bibliography and index.

The Duel by Dr. Robert Baldick is "an attempt to trace the history of this remarkable, sanguinary institution." [preface] In his attempt, Dr. Baldick has collected some of the best tales of duelling and compiled them into a fascinating romp through the history of personal combat.

The stories and descriptions he provides allow the reader a glimpse of what duelling was about from a personal point of view.

"Baldick's book," says Dane Torbenson, "while informative and enjoyable reading, is anecdotal rather than analytical in scope. He examines the institution of the duel through reports of notable duels rather than examining the circumstances which allowed it to flourish."

Over one hundred actual duels are described in this text. The tales are told from actual participants in the duel, or eye-witnesses who recorded the event in a letter or a journal. Many of the stories, although summaries of the actual event, contain quotes from the primary sources.

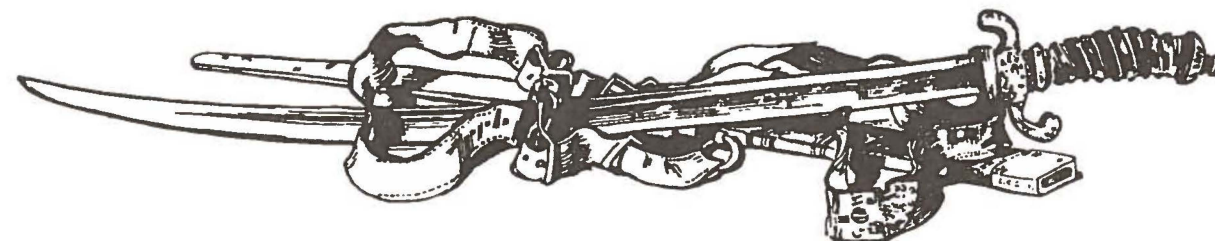


When differing accounts of the duel exist, Dr. Baldick gives equal time to both sides.

Thirteen chapters in all, the book covers duelling from its origin with the judicial duel, through various descriptions of encounters in France, Britain, America and other countries. Chapters are dedicated to unusual duels, female duelists and the final decline of duelling. One chapter, "The Pen and the Sword," is a "brief consideration of the duelling experience and duelling literature of a few famous writers." [p. 179]

What I enjoyed most about this book was the style in which the text was presented. Many books of this kind are ponderous reading, weighed down with academic language and dry "textbook" expressions. Dr. Baldick has made his book a joy to read. The tales are told with freshness and enthusiasm. The book reads less like historical accounts of duelling and more like a swashbuckling adventure.

The 98 illustrations in the text have been selected with great care. Many of



the pictures were chosen because of their relevance to the duel being described. Other illustrations are periodical cartoons poking fun at the institution of duelling. The contrast in these depictions helps the reader view the period and frame of mind of those for and against the institution. My only real complaint about the illustrations, seconded by my fellow reviewers, is that even more could be used.

David Boushey says Baldick's book "gives a working knowledge of the history of swordplay and how it can relate to theatrical choreography." "Baldick's book," comments Dane Torbenson, "provides a good background on the who's and where's of duelling, if not the why's."

In all, Dr. Baldick has some wonderful tales to tell and he does so admirably. For fight directors and actors alike, these descriptions provide firsthand insight to what men of the period thought, said and did about duelling. *The Duel* is a delightful piece of reading and well worth the time to locate.

CONTRIBUTING REVIEWERS

David L. Boushey is a fight master and founder of the SAFD.

Dane Torbenson is a graduate student in theatre at the University of Colorado, Boulder, a certified actor/combatant and SAFD member.

MARTINI A-Z OF FENCING

by E.D. Morton

London: Queen Anne Press, a division of McDonald & Co. (Publishers) Ltd.
ISBN 0-356-15439-4.

Hardcover, Pp. 192
(Pp. 190 text, Pp. 2 bibliography).
134 illustrations. Select Bibliography.

E.D. Morton started his fencing career at Oxford University, traditionally a strong center of British fencing. He holds an A.F.A. Gold award in foil, and is a qualified A.F.A. coach at foil, epee and sabre. Mr. Morton is an associate member of the British Academy of Fencing.

As an author, he's written two

detective stories and a series of short stories about the eccentric masters and members of a famous old London fencing club.

Mr. Morton's original intention in creating this book "was to compile an extended glossary, incorporating as many as possible of the technical terms of the three great historical schools of swordsmanship; Italian, Spanish and French."

As he compiled his information, he "decided further to include brief notes on famous masters of the past and at least a few of the distinguished fencers of this century. From this it was but a step to legendary swordsmen of fiction and those more generalized entries on historical institutions and personages." [preface]

EXTENSIVE GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Geared toward both the novice and advanced fencer, the text is an intriguing source of information for the theatrical swordsman as well. Although "It is doubtful if any book on fencing could be truly encyclopedic . . ." Mr. Morton's *A-Z of Fencing* is one of the most extensive glossaries of ancient and modern fencing terms available in print today.¹ [preface]

The glossary provides the reader with a broad scope of information about fencing, duelling and swash-buckling in both fact and fiction.

"The historical tidbits and anecdotes about famous swordsmen," says Drew Fracher, "are most exciting." Background, traditions and theories of the science of defense are informative and entertaining reading. The text provides, in short, concise definitions, information that would be difficult to locate anywhere else.

FAMOUS FENCERS, PAST & PRESENT

Aside from a glossary of terms, Mr. Morton's book provides a selected, but intriguing, listing of famous fencers and masters, past and present.

Definitions are generally clear and concise. Sometimes, however,

in an attempt to cut to the meat of the matter, information becomes confusing or difficult to comprehend. Unlike a standard dictionary or glossary, the text is neither so weighty nor so bare bones that it is a chore to read.

"I READ IT FROM COVER TO COVER."

Lawrence Woodhouse points out that "while this is really just a glossary, I read it from cover to cover. I found it to be more than a glossary; I found it to be a good historical reference book, too." Richard Gradkowski adds, "This book is a fun read."

As a reference manual the glossary does have its faults. Sources are not listed with the definition. This makes the text difficult to use for research.

In Mr. Gradkowski's notes on the text, he cites several errors, including the *balestra* and *corps-a-corps*. He suggests that "for a person doing scholarly research, the facts be double-checked." For historical research, it is probably best to go to primary sources.

A BRITISH VIEW OF HISTORY

Both Mr. Gradkowski and Mr. Woodhouse noted a British slant to the text. "The book tends to be skewed in favor of a British view of history," says Gradkowski. Mr. Woodhouse adds that "this is, after all, a British book, edited and published in Britain, so naturally there will be an emphasis on their own."

Mr. Woodhouse goes on to cite an example from Morton's definition of fencing: "the writer states 'Fencing has never been practiced very widely outside Europe. . . .' [p. 62] Obviously the writer or editor has never been outside Europe, or he would know about the fencing practiced here in the U.S.A."

With over 130 illustrations, the glossary is also a visual guide. "The numerous illustrations are a fascinating compendium of fencing lore," says Richard Gradkowski. Drew Fracher supports this by pointing

out that there are "lots of great action shots and clear plates." Illustrations are from a variety of periods and are intriguing and informative.

It is difficult to over-stress the necessity of such a source book. Most fencing books offer a partial glossary of terms, and some offer nothing at all. From *salle* to *salle* and coach to coach, the language of fencing differs.

Mr. Morton's book, although not always accurate, offers the most concise information available in one easy to use source. Despite its faults, it is highly recommended to anyone interested in the science of fencing and the art of stage combat.

"A GOLD MINE OF KNOWLEDGE"

"This book is an excellent piece of work, and a valuable source of hard to find information. A book of this kind has been long overdue," says Lawrence Woodhouse. "The brief expositions on the history and techniques of swordplay are a gold mine of nuggets of knowledge," adds Richard Gradkowski.

Martini A-Z of Fencing is "a most valuable text for stage combat use," says Drew Fracher. "Even though the text is actually concerned with sport fencing, I would recommend it to anyone interested in swordplay. I use it all the time [and] I think the text is a must for all swordpeople, especially teachers of stage combat. A handy and easy-to-use reference. Buy it!"

¹ The "Martini" in the title derives from Martini and Rossi Co., international wine distributors. Along with golf, polo, skiing, tennis and racing, they have sponsored international competitions in fencing for almost forty years. Martini and Rossi contributed generously to the cost of producing the book.

CONTRIBUTING REVIEWERS

Drew Fracher is a fight master and currently serves as vice-president of the SAFD.

Lawrence Woodhouse is a certified actor/combatant with the SAFD and a member of the United States Fencing Association.

Richard J. Gradkowski is secretary-treasurer of the United States Fencing Coaches Association and a member of the National Collegiate Athletic Association and the International Academy of Arms and an honorary member of SAFD.

METHODS AND PRACTICE OF ELIZABETHAN SWORDPLAY

by Craig Turner and Tony Soper

Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.
ISBN 0-8093-1562-9.
Hardcover, Pp. 139 (Pp. 117 text, Pp. 8 end notes; Pp. 6 bibliography; Pp. 5 index).
11 illustrations. Bibliography and index. \$22.95

Mr. Turner and Mr. Soper have undertaken to "explore a relatively little understood part of everyday violence in English culture around 1600: sword and rapier fighting."

Their book "is an attempt (1) to compare and contrast what we know of early Elizabethan combat practice with the revolutionary rapier influences from Europe just before 1600, (2) to reconstruct rapier fighting technique by comparing the ideas of Di Grassi, Saviolo, and Silver, and (3) to suggest a typical Elizabethan style of swordplay as it might have appeared in the streets, alleys, and early-morning fields." [p. XV]

SHAKESPEAREAN SWORDPLAY

In his forward, Joseph Papp says that Turner and Soper have "tried to show how early swordplay worked in the context of Shakespeare's culture . . . [and] explain numerous references to sword techniques in plays of the period." He further states that "Actors and directors can use these explanations to recharge their versions of the plays."

The authors hope to educate the theatrical community toward "historicality" in theatrical productions. "Our greatest hope is that producers and directors—as central figures in the theatrical process—will seriously consider these ideas. Incorporating historically accurate fight movement will not only provide insights to textual questions, it will also add new, theatrically exciting elements." [p.117]

With this desire Mr. Soper and Mr. Turner set out to analyze the works of *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals*¹ and present their finding to the theatrical community. In their endeavor, however, I feel they

have fallen short.

Although intended for directors and producers, a reader uneducated with both topic and period styles would have difficulty with many of the terms used, which are defined only randomly.

UPDATED LANGUAGE & MEANINGS

The text of the three fencing manuals is updated in language and the "meanings" of long passages are condensed for the modern reader. At times, however, the modernized language of the original texts is not explained, defined or clarified in any satisfactory way. In defense of the authors, they have made great attempts to note their text, listing their source and reference material.

The text, for the most part, is easy to read, but sometimes hard to follow. The general structure of the book makes sense. Transitions from chapter to chapter are easily followed and the through-line is clear.

The text is poorly illustrated for its purpose with only eleven illustrations offered, imported from the manuals of Di Grassi, Saviolo and Silver.

Although there is some wonderful research here, the book is nonetheless incorrect in many places. Linda McCollum feels "They may have accomplished what they set out to do . . . but not thoroughly and maybe not as 'painstakingly' as they might have. The task they set out to do is far too big to be encompassed in one small book of 134 pages."

INACCURACIES IN THE TEXT

"The authors tend to have gone to secondary sources which are not always accurate," comments Linda McCollum. "For example, on page 10 they cite Viscount Dillion's 'Armour and Weapons' in *Shakespeare's England* claiming that 'Rowland Yorke introduced rapier play into England around 1587 on his return from fighting for the Spanish in the Low Countries.' However, Rowland never returned from the Netherlands

in 1587 as he died in February of that year while in the Spanish service, a fact they could have picked up in the *DNB* (*Dictionary of National Biography*)."

SECONDARY SOURCES

Linda lists other errors, offering primary sources for correction. "Now these are trivial things that I just happen to know because of my own research," she says, "which makes me wonder about those things I am not as familiar with and their accuracy."

Another example of secondary source and conjecture is found on page 38. The authors use *passata* and *passata sotto* as the same term and apply it to Shakespeare's "Come, sir, your passado" [*Romeo and Juliet* III.i.83].

However, the two fencing terms bear completely different definitions in my research. The action now known as the *passata sotto* did exist around 1600. Savator Fabris offers a move described much like the *passata sotto* in his *De lo Schermo*.² The term given this action at that time, however, was the *ferita di prima*.

The first time I am aware of the term *passata sotto* appearing in print is in the early nineteenth century work of Italian masters Rosaroll and Grisetti.³

The *passata*, the chief means of closing measure and escaping a hit while allowing for a counter attack, used by Saviolo is in the manner of Marozzo and a completely different action than the *passata sotto*.

PASSATA OR PASADA?

Many authorities believe that Shakespeare referred to the Spanish *pasada*, from the work of Spanish master Jeronimo de Carranza (1569). This action is a passing step on the advance that carries the combatant forward roughly two feet.

None of this information is cited by the authors, and, unfortunately, many more examples like this exist. In Dane Torbenson's notes on the

text he finds "that in their introduction they attribute the origin of Touchstone's 'giving the lie' speech to Segar's *Book of Honor and Armes* and give absolutely no source for this assumption. Elsewhere in their book they cite numerous sources as attributing this speech to Saviolo."

The authors also seem to have taken the Elizabethan manuals at their word, embodying the science of fencing in its purest form. I believe these Elizabethan manuals to be the rudimentary basics, supplying information that would tempt the student into the salle to study skills and technique to be learned only from the master in his school.

In their exploration of the styles of swordplay prevalent in England around 1600, Mr. Turner and Mr. Soper focus mainly with the texts of Di Grassi, Saviolo and Silver—these being the only existing texts in English that date prior to 1600.

FOREIGN MASTERS EXCLUDED

Why, however, did they neglect the works of Ridolfo Capo Ferro (1610), Salvator Fabris (1606), Nicoloetto Giganti (1606), and the English master Joseph Swetnam (1617)? It is logical to assume that at least some of the methods taught by these masters were in use before 1600. It is also important to examine foreign sources, especially since "A fencing master, especially Italian or French, was almost a necessity for every gentleman wishing to learn the new ways." [p. xxiv]

Still, not everyone was critical of this book. Joseph Martinez says, "This is the most pertinent book to be written on the subject of stage combat since my text *Combat Mime*." Patrick Crean says it is a "splendid and absorbing book . . . an invaluable reference book for fight directors and all those involved in staging exhibitions of historical swordplay."

Despite her findings in the text, Linda McCollum would recommend the text as it "certainly would stimulate interest in the period/field."

NOTES

1. Jackson, James L. *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals* [Containing the following works:

Grassi, Giacomo Di
His True Arte of Defence.
London: 1594

Saviolo, Vincentio
His Practice in Two Books; the first intreating of the use of the Rapier & Dagger, the second of honour and honourable quarrels.
London: 1595.

Silver, George
Brief Instructions on My Paradoxes of Defence.
London: 1600.

Silver, George
Paradoxe of Defence.
London: 1599

Delmar, New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1972.

2. Fabris, Salvator
De lo Schermo overo scienza d'arme.
Copenhagen: Henrico Waltkirch. Folio. 1606.

3. "Scorza (Rosaroll) [capitano de' zappatori]; Grisetti (Pietro) [capitano di artiglieria]. *La scienza della scherma espota dai due amici*. 4°. 1803. Milano." Carl A Thimm. *A Complete Bibliography of Fencing and Duelling*. Benjamin Blom, Inc., Bronx, New York, 1968. p. 262

4. Patrick Crean, letter of appreciation for *Methods and Practise of Elizabethan Swordplay*.

CONTRIBUTING REVIEWERS

Linda McCollum is a member of SAFF, serves as on-site coordinator of the National Stage Combat Workshop at University of Las Vegas-Nevada and was editor of the *Fight Master* for six years.

Dane Torbenson is a graduate student in theatre at the University of Colorado, Boulder, a certified actor/combatant and SAFF member.

Joseph Martinez is a fight master, and professor of theatre at Washington and Lee University in Virginia.

Fun Facts

IT COULD HAVE BEEN
DOUGLAS FAIRBANKS
IN THE BLACK PIRATE
WHO SET THE FASHION.

He looked mighty dashing in 1926 swinging his Spanish cup hilt, fending off buccaneers at swordpoint. Perhaps he began a trend . . .

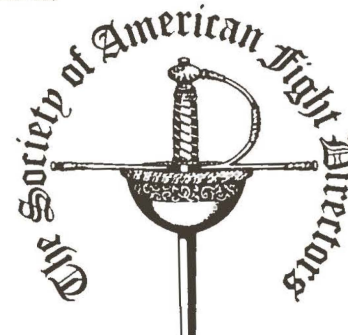
Whatever the reason, the Spanish cup hilt has long reigned as king of theatrical rapiers. It is not surprising that the SAFF adopted this stylish and eminently practical hilt as its logo. What is surprising is that this hilt had such a limited life as a fighting weapon.

The cup hilt first appeared in Spain around 1650 and was perfectly suited to the thrusting action of the long rapier. It quickly spread throughout Spain and southern Italy, but its popularity lasted only through the first decade of the eighteenth century. Then fashion took a turn.

Spain and Italy ruled the fashion world through the sixteenth century, but early in the seventeenth century, France began to lead the way. In 1654, young Louis XIV became not only king of France, but king of fashion as well.

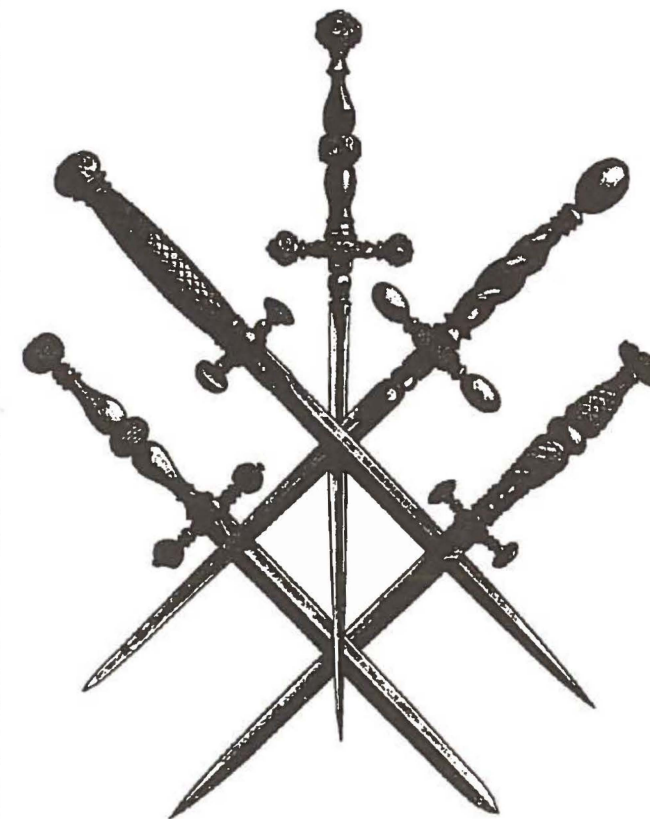
With a new emphasis on urban manners and sophistication in dress, the wide cup hilt, with its long quillons and long rapier blade, was deemed clumsy to wear. Just as the cup hilt was reaching its zenith of popularity in Spain and Italy, the elegant little smallsword became all the rage at Versailles. And the styles of Versailles were emulated everywhere.

Perhaps it is fitting that, though French fashion designers killed the Spanish cup hilt, ultimately Hollywood costume designers would immortalize it.



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Put to the Test

FOLLOWING ARE THE RESULTS OF SAFD CERTIFICATION TESTING.

ACTOR/COMBATANTS

OCTOBER

Seattle

Date: October 5, 1990

Instructor: Geoff Alm

Adjudicator: David L. Boushey

This was my first testing of Geoff's combatants and, by and large, it was a rewarding experience. All six combatants passed, which is a feather in Geoff's hat.

I did observe a common problem among the students: all of the combatants broke off their fighting to deliver lines. This became a problem because every time they began to pick up energy and intent, the bottom would drop out of the fight when the actors would pause to make some clever retort.

The fights were safe and well-executed, but somewhat slow and monotonous. The fighters weren't "going for the gold." I requested all the combatants to repeat their fights, eliminating the dialogue. Suddenly, the fight was the thing, not the words. Tension and the sense of potential danger entered into the scenes. With the overall improvement evident, I passed all of them.

I'm sure Geoff will, in future, observe the overall pacing of his students in their fight test scenes. All in all, a good day at the fights!

Eric Newman	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Lynn Kopelke	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Erwin Rosin	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Mark Rabe	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Michael Taylor	R & D, Unarmed, QS

DECEMBER

Brandeis University, Boston

Date: December 11, 1990

Instructor: Robert Walsh

Adjudicator: David S. Leong

The fights were too slow. I asked the combatants to repeat their fights at a faster pace. Combatants were too careful and lacked a sense of reckless abandonment. In the future, test scenes will need to be further developed.

Kim Herosian	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Kip Keith	R & D, Unarmed, QS
John Bennitz	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Paul Kiman	R & D, Unarmed, QS
Steve Anderson	R & D, Unarmed, QS
John Stamm	R & D, Unarmed, QS

University of Virginia

Date: December 13, 1990

Instructor: Colleen Kelly

Adjudicator: J.D. Martinez

Mark Boynton	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
	<i>Recommended</i>
Howard Weinberger	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS
Joel Jones	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed, QS

Seattle

ACTOR/COMBATANT RECERTIFICATION FIGHT TEST

Date: December 29, 1990

Instructor: Geoff Alm

Adjudicator: David L. Boushey

Jeff Klein	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
James Monitor	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed

JANUARY

Folger Theatre, Washington, D.C.

Date: January 14, 1991

Instructor: Brad Waller

Adjudicator: J.D. Martinez

David Costabile	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword
Drew Kahl	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword

Columbia University, Chicago

Date: January 19, 1991

Instructor: David Woolley

Adjudicator: Richard Raether

Jennifer Pompa	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
	<i>Recommended</i>
Crislyn V'soske	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Laura Chvatal	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Joe Albright	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Allen Stevens	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Brett Radford	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Danny Robles	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Nick Siapkaris	R & D, Unarmed, BS, Smallsword
Mike Nichols	R & D, Unarmed, BS

FEBRUARY

Folger Theatre, Washington, D.C.

Date: February 4, 1991

Instructor: Brad Waller

Adjudicator: J.D. Martinez

Randy Dalmas	R & D, Unarmed, Brdswrd
Andrew White	R & D, Unarmed, Brdswrd
Katie Mahaffey	R & D, Unarmed, Brdswrd
Chris Young	R & D, Unarmed, Brdswrd
Michael Jerome Johnson	R & D, Unarmed, Brdswrd
	<i>Recommended</i>
Jennifer Collins	R & D, Unarmed, Brdswrd
	<i>Recommended</i>

Seattle

ACTOR/COMBATANT RECERTIFICATION FIGHT TEST

Date: February 13, 1991

Instructor: Geoff Alm

Adjudicator: David L. Boushey

Gordon Carpenter	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed
Geoffrey Alm	Rapier & Dagger, Unarmed

New York, NY

Date: February 16, 1991

Instructor: Ian Rose

Adjudicator: J. Allen Suddeth

Though the performers here were obviously experienced combatants, an unfortunate (though minor) injury occurred and the test was stopped. I had no choice but to invalidate both combatants. I do want to stress that the injury did not result from a choreographic problem and that one partner did not strike the other. It was "just one of those things."

Asolo Conservatory, F.S.U.

Date: February 24, 1991

Instructor: Dan Carter

Adjudicator: J. Allen Suddeth

Nine students participated in a lively set of scenes. Although they were enthusiastic, not all combatants managed to blend technique into their scenes. Those who did not pass were encouraged to continue study, as all had potential. Of particular note was Gregory Radcliff, who performed very professionally indeed.

Michael Curry	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword
Ken DeWyn	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword
David Parkes	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword
Gregory Radcliff	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword
Joy Ovington	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword
Jacquelyn Ritz	R & D, Unarmed, Broadsword

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SUCCEEDED WHEN
PUT TO THE TEST!**

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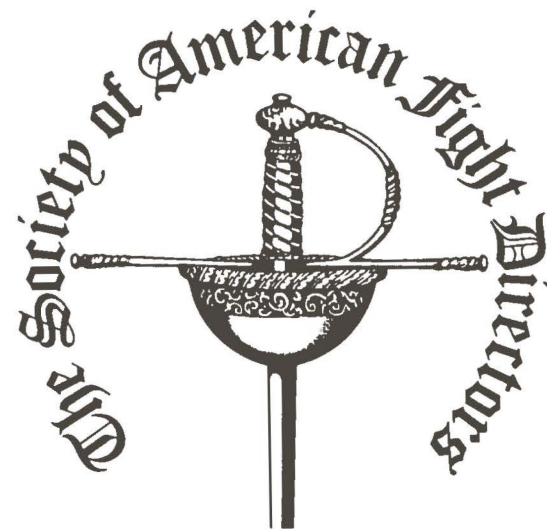
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Led by the country's top fight choreographers, the SAFD stands for the very highest standard in effective and safe theatrical fighting.

The SAFD has developed recognized standards for levels of skill in the stage combat arts. The SAFD certifies individuals at three levels.

CERTIFIED ACTOR/COMBATANT

The actor/combatant is an individual who has received basic training in three to six weapon forms and passed a performance test which includes a number of required moves. The actor/combatant certificate expires three years from the date of issue, but is renewable through a re-testing process. The actor/combatant certificate does not qualify an individual to teach stage combat or to arrange fight scenes. But it does signify SAFD recognition of this individual as a safe, competent performer.

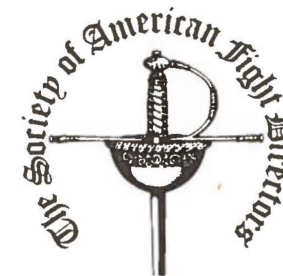
CERTIFIED TEACHER

A certified teacher of stage combat is an individual who has first passed the actor/combatant certification fight test and then, in addition, had extensive educational training and passed SAFD tests in the following areas: teaching techniques, historical styles, weapons theory and practice, and theatrical choreography. The SAFD endorses this individual to teach stage combat.

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A fight master is an individual who has completed all requirements of the actor/combatant and the certified teacher. Beyond this, he or she must have a strong professional background, have choreographed a minimum of twenty union productions and passed an extensive oral, written and practical examination. Fight masters are endorsed by the SAFD to teach, coach, and choreograph in professional theatre, film and television, and in the academic arena.

Membership Application



The Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD) is a non-profit organization devoted to training, and improving the quality of stage combat. We are committed to the highest standards of safety in the theatrical, film and television industries. The SAFD offers educational opportunities across the country at universities, privately, and at the annual National Stage Combat Workshop expressly to disseminate this information. In addition the SAFD certifies individuals in three categories:

Actor/Combatant
Teacher
Fight Master

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