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Fight Master Magazine

The Society of American Fight Directors

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Winter 1999

## **The Fight Master, Fall/Winter 1999, Vol. 22 Issue 2**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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# The Fight Master

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors



**Shattering Lances**, two knights joust on Spanish Andalusian stallions at Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament. Photo provided by Medieval Times

**IN THE  
SPANISH STYLE**  
Caranza, Navarez,  
Thibault and the  
Mysterious Circle

**FIGHTING IN  
ARMOR**

# The Fight Master

Fall/Winter 1999 Volume XXII, Number 2

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One of many men (Remi Sandri) fights Warwick (Derek Weeden) in a battle from Oregon Shakespeare's 1992 Henry VI. Fights by Christopher Villa, photo by Christopher Briscoe.

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# EDITORIALY SPEAKING

With the publication of the first part of John Michael Greer's translation of Gerard Thibault's *Académie de l'Espée*, information on the Spanish style of fencing is now readily available and there is a renewed interest in the Mysterious Circle. With the help of Malcolm Fare, the editor of *The Sword*, this issue of *The Fight Master* focuses on the Spanish style of fencing bringing to light not only the technique but clarifying some of the mistaken notions that have been generated about the Mysterious Circle. Ramon Martinez takes a close look at Caranza, Navarez and Thibault, while John McGrath focuses on a little known development in the rapier. Anthony DeLongis, through hands-on experiments with the style, examines the relationship of the Mysterious Circle to Eastern martial arts. DeLongis worked with Tim Weske, owner and head instructor of Sword Play Fencing Studios in Burbank, where they physically laid out the Mysterious Circle so that they could visualize the system in three dimensions.

The Spanish influence was probably more prevalent than most readers might think. Spanish mercenaries fought alongside the English on English soil and rubbed elbows with English nobility at court functions. When Mary married Philip II of Spain, there were more Spaniards on the streets of London than Englishmen, much to the chagrin of the English. And when Louis XIII married Anne of Austria, Spanish fashions reigned supreme in France. Obviously, Spanish influences were prevalent in England and throughout Europe. George Silver even stated he admired the Spanish style of fencing and years later Angelo even devotes a section in his *L'Ecole des Armes* on how to deal with the Spanish style when encountered, a valid indication that the style was still practiced and that the Spanish swordsman was universally respected and feared.

A related article in this issue is the second part of Payson Burt's article on "Proximity" which includes the Three Rings of Progression and how they are used by the actor/combatant. J. T. Marlowe visits Medieval Times and Neil Fishman shares some helpful hints on how one can prepare for retirement in this business.

For future issues, the editors are seeking articles on alternative styles such as Renaissance Faires, Action Entertainment, and other forms of staged combat in the entertainment industry, martial arts and stage combat, as well as articles related to Greek and Roman times and fighting styles. Articles are accepted at any time. The deadline for articles for consideration for the Fall/Winter 2000 issue is June 1.

~Linda Carlyle McCollum

## The Fight Master

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

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Articles and letters for *The Fight Master* are accepted at anytime. Articles intended for inclusion in the Spring/Summer issue must be received by November 1. Articles intended for inclusion in the Fall/Winter issue must be received by June 1.

Submissions to *The Fight Master* should be sent to  
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Submitted material will be edited for clarity and length. Articles should be typed, and include a short biography, 50 words or less, about the author. Please include your address, phone/fax and email address in your correspondence.

To advertise in *The Fight Master*, payment and notification should be sent to  
Lisa Jones  
1240C Hamilton Court  
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(919) 388-8945

Notification for the Spring/Summer issue must be received by November 1; artwork due by November 15. Notification for the Fall/Winter issue must be received by June 1; artwork due July 15. Please call for rates or other information.

# The Fight Master

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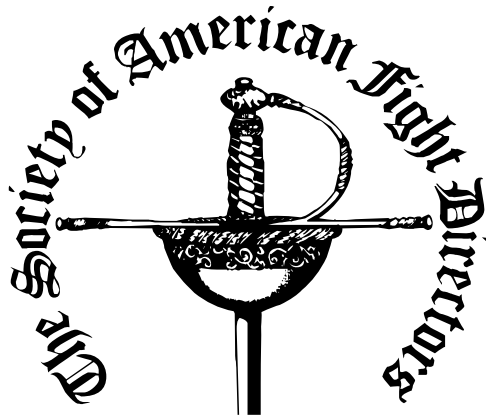
## The Society of American Fight Directors

### Actor Combatant

The Actor/Combatant is an individual who has received basic training in three to six weapons forms and passed a proficiency skills test. The Actor/Combatant certificate expires three years from the date of issue, but is renewable through a re-testing process. The Actor/Combatant certificate signifies SAFD recognition of this individual as a safe, competent performer.

### Teacher

A Certified Teacher of stage combat is an individual who has first passed the Actor/Combatant proficiency skills test and, in addition, had extensive educational training and passed SAFD tests in teaching techniques, historical styles, weapons theory and practice and stage choreography. The SAFD endorses Certified Teachers to teach stage combat.



Founded in 1977, the Society of American Fight Directors is a non-profit organization of theatre professionals, academicians, friends and supporters, all of whom share a common interest in the art of stage violence. The SAFD stands for the very highest standard in effective and safe theatrical fighting.

The SAFD has developed recognized standards for four levels of skill in the stage combat arts.

### Fight Director

The Fight Director is an individual who has completed all requirements of an Actor/Combatant and a Certified Teacher. Beyond this, he or she must have a strong background in fight choreography. Fight Directors are endorsed by the SAFD to teach, coach and choreograph fights professionally.

### College of Fight Masters

Fight Master is an honorary title bestowed from within the organization on individuals who have a strong professional background and provide continuing support to the SAFD. Fight Masters are endorsed by the SAFD as top professionals in the field of stage combat.

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# PHOTO CALL

**T**he *Fight Master* is currently seeking active photos portraying mounted combat, full size rapier, Renaissance faïces, dance and combat, battles, and whip work for its Spring/Summer 2000 issue and martial arts and stage combat for the Fall/Winter issue. Black & white and color prints (no smaller than 5x7) and slides will be accepted. All photos should include performers' names and roles if fewer than five are pictured, photographer, play, playwright, fight director, theatre company and year of performance. Photos should also include return address. Without this information, pictures cannot be used. 8x10 prints or color slides with strong vertical orientations are also desired for covers; these should be shot as close up as possible (full bodies need not be visible).

The deadline for graphic material in the Spring/Summer issue is February 15, for the Fall/Winter issue it is August 15. Future submissions are accepted at any time. Send all prints sandwiched between two pieces of cardboard in an envelope clearly labeled, "Photos—Do Not Bend" to

Jeff A.R. Jones, Graphic Designer  
1240C Hamilton Court  
Cary, NC 27511

If there are any questions, please feel free to call (919) 388-8945 or email JARJones@aol.com.

Again, exciting photos are encouraged from all levels of the SAFD membership.

—Jeff A.R. Jones

## Workshop Coordinators and Advertisers

As of the Spring/Summer 2000 issue, *The Fight Master* will only advertise workshops that have officially been sanctioned as SAFD workshops as detailed in the Policies & Procedures. Please note that the SAFD no longer receives any percentage of a workshop's income. Workshops are entitled to a free 1/4 page ad in *The Fight Master*; larger ads may be purchased at a discount rate. Ads can also be designed by the graphic designer for a slight fee.

## CONTRIBUTORS

**Payson Burt** is a Certified Teacher, Fight Director, LA Regional Representative and chairman of the Research Committee. He has taught at Temple University, the Curtis Institute of Music and the University of Alabama. Burt, who works with the Pasadena Shakespeare Company and the Los Angeles Fight Academy, is the author of *Of Paces*, a training manual for footwork.

**Raymond Delgado** is a freelance writer and instructor of voice living in Florida who has an avid interest in Spanish swordplay and culture.

**Anthony DeLongis** is an actor, fight director and weapons trainer. De Longis' film and television credits include *Roadhouse*, *Masters of the Universe*, *Sinbad*, *Highlander*, *the Series*, *The November Conspiracy*, *Expect No Mercy*, *Cybertracker 2*, *The Last Chance Detectives*, *Wild Bill*, *Far and Away*, *Circle of Iron* and *Jaguar Lives*. De Longis is a founding member of The Light Horsemen, a mounted cavalry team which performs realistic combat routines with sabres, lances and bullwhips. His website is [www.delongis.com](http://www.delongis.com)

**Neil Fishman** is certified as an Actor/Combatant. Fishman is also a member of SAG, AFTRA, and AEA. He has been in practice as an accountant since 1989, and he is a shareholder in the firm of Fishman Associates CPAs, PC. Fishman may be reached at his e-mail address: [fishcpa@ix.netcom.com](mailto:fishcpa@ix.netcom.com).

**John Michael Greer** is a writer and scholar with a degree in the history of ideas from the University of

### SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

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Washington. His interest in Thibault stems from his background in the mystical Pythagorean geometry of the Renaissance and early modern periods.

**J.T. Marlowe** is an LA director who divides time between developing a new play and seeking financing for a first film, which has been awarded a Kodak Filmmakers Grant.

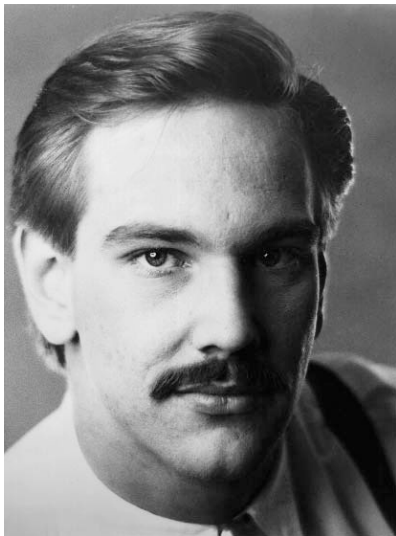
**Ramon Martinez**, director of the Martinez Academy of Arms, has devoted over twenty-four years to the study and teaching of classical fencing and historical swordsmanship. For fifteen years he has done intensive research in the Spanish system of swordsmanship in order to reconstruct the style.

**Linda Carlyle McCollum**, a member of the SAFD, the United States Fencing Coaches Association and the International Academy of Arms, serves as editor of *The Fight Master* and on-site coordinator for the NSCW. McCollum is a faculty member in Theatre at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

**John McGrath**, who lives in England, is a fencing historian and former naval captain with a long association with fencing.

**Raymond Smith**, Ph.D., has been a fight director and fencing teacher since 1952. Smith has freelanced as military coordinator for such films as *Top Gun*, *Hunt for Red October*, *A Few Good Men*, *Courage Under Fire* and *GI Jane*. His dissertation on *The Art of the Sword in the Late Middle Ages* is available through University Microfilms International.

# FROM THE PRESIDENT



As the rest of the world seems to be in preparation for the end of things as we know them, the SAFD and its new executive committee are embracing change and the promise of the new millennium. This past summer marks the first official meeting of the new executive committee. Locked in a poorly air-conditioned room some-

where in the Nevada desert, they worked through a long agenda of finances, policies and procedures. Much of what they did will not be readily visible to the membership. In time, however, everyone will notice a greater efficiency of operation, better communication with the overall membership and a higher profile in the professional and academic communities.

Along with the executive committee, special mention should be made here of the elected membership representatives. As the Society's governing body these two groups worked together to see that all the members of the organization had a voice at the bargaining table. As a team they worked together to hammer out a new glossary of terms, clarify the new Advanced Actor/Combatant status, revise the policies for skills testing and renewal, and certify the addition of Knife as the eighth testing discipline in the Society. This last issue has already borne fruit. The first Knife Skills Proficiency Test was offered at the Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop this summer with complete acceptance by the staff and the student population. It is expected that the same will be happening elsewhere quite soon.

It is here that it is important to take the opportunity to thank the elected representatives. As their term draws to an end, the Society owes them gratitude for their time and service. The insights that these individuals brought to the table greatly influenced the decisions made about the operation of this organization. Members should bear this in mind as nominations and elections for these positions come about. These individuals are the voice of the membership, and should be chosen with thought and encouraged to make a difference. The present members have done so—and with great aplomb.

This summer also marked the 20th Anniversary of the National Stage Combat Workshop, and like the executive committee, the College of Fight Masters are preparing for the year 2000 not with feat, but forethought. With all the changes that have taken place in the organization and operation of the SAFD, it became

apparent that the existing structure of the NSCW could no longer effectively meet membership needs. With the addition of Single Sword last year and Knife this summer, the focus of training was becoming quantity oriented, not quality. To address this, the structure of the NSCW needed to change. And change it has!

Starting in 2000 a new addition to the training offered at the NSCW will be an Intermediate Actor/Combatant Workshop (IACW). Like the Actor/Combatant Workshop, the IACW will be open to any that apply and will be run in a similar three-weapon, three-week format. Instead of the core training being in rapier and dagger, unarmed, and broadsword, the IACW will offer core classes in knife, smallsword and broadsword and shield. By allowing for a class structure that offers more contact hours on fewer weapons the focus is taken off quantity of work and put back on quality. For those who wish to test for the advanced level, the IACW will also offer renewal classes in unarmed, broadsword and rapier and dagger. As the new ruling for advanced status is having earned six of the eight disciplines, a student could leave the IACW with their advanced certificate. Both workshops will still offer a great variety of additional training including the newly added fighting for film.

Finally, the Society is proud to announce that the highly acclaimed Fight Director Workshop offered by Fight Master J. Allen Suddeth at the Celebration Barn Theatre is now part of the NSCW. To ensure a smooth transition, the retention of quality in training and continuity in content, Maestro Suddeth has graciously agreed to remain on staff for the next five years. He will serve as both the workshop coordinator and as a member of the faculty. Other members of the College of Fight Masters will join Suddeth on staff, starting in 2000 with Fight Master Fredricksen. Suddeth, along with the rest of the Fight Masters, is truly excited about this change and feels that with what is already in place the involvement of the Society will only make a great workshop better.

With so much afoot for the year 2000 the SAFD has more cause to celebrate than to panic. Some say that the millennium will bring about the end of society—that is not known. It is known, however, that the Society of American Fight Directors has a great deal to look forward to, and little to fear. In fact, with all these great plans, it would seem that the Society's only fear of the new millennium is that all the data amassed for the next few years' projects are lost in a major system crash. However, only time will tell.

Keep Fighting the Good Fight—

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Dale Anthony Girard". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

A Fellow Comrade in Arms,  
Dale Anthony Girard, President

the 21<sup>st</sup> annual

The Society of  
American Fight Directors



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# National Stage Combat Workshops

July 10-28, 2000



For more information about the National Stage Combat  
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# Spanish Fencing in the 16th Century



Tabula XXV from Girard Thibault's *Academie de l'Espée* demonstrates specific moves and responses as described on page 10.

by Ramon Martinez  
Reprinted from *The Sword*

Schools of arms have existed in Spain since the middle ages in places such as Leon, Toledo and Valladolid. However, the unique system of Spanish swordsmanship that developed in the 16th century was born of the genius of one individual, Don Jeronimo de Carranza. Considered the father of the Spanish school, he was given the title *El Primer Inventor de la Ciencia de las Armas* (The First Inventor of the Science of Arms) by his disciple and successor Don Luis Pacheco de Narvaez.

Carranza, in his treatise *De la Filosofia de las Armas*, 1569, states that he created his school by applying his education, of which science and philosophy were a major part, to the improvement of the management of arms. He called his system of swordsmanship *La Destreza* rather than *esgrima* (fencing), because it better expressed what his system encompassed. The term has no literal translation, but can be interpreted as a "high level art and skill." Carranza created a complete system that incorporated science, art, experience, philosophy and spirituality. These crucial elements must be viewed in their historical context. The 16th century Spanish culture, religious, philosophical and political character are the key to understanding the mindset from which *La Destreza* emerged.

Carranza and Narvaez, as well as all the masters who fol-

lowed them, held the firm conviction that science, which is irrefutable, must be applied to swordsmanship. Carranza chose the science of geometry because it has elements that are not only necessary but also facilitate the cognitive process. Geometry improves the quality of thinking in non-mathematical situations. It is the primary method for training the *Diestro*, as the swordsmen were called, to think logically, methodically and unemotionally. Ibn Khaldun, in his work, *The Muqaddimah*, 1377, states: "Geometry enlightens the intellect and sets one's mind right. All its proofs are very clear and orderly. It is hardly possible for errors to enter into geometrical reasoning, because it is well arranged and orderly. Thus, the mind that constantly applies itself to geometry is not likely to fall into error. In this convenient way, the person who knows geometry acquires intelligence."

Geometry also provides one with a firm understanding of special relationships. In *La Destreza* the understanding of such is imperative, because it affects every aspect of the system: stance, footwork, body-weapon positioning, distance, attack and defense. Narvaez, in his treatise *Libro de las Grandezas de la Espada*, 1600, explains that the *La Destreza* is presented in geometric proofs in order that the *Diestro* sees how the placements of the body, arm or sword are most effective and efficient in relation to those of the adversary.

The proper stance, according to Carranza and Narvaez, is one in which the swordsman assumes an upright, semi-profiled posture, legs straight and heels slightly apart (approximately the

space of one foot's length). The sword arm is held straight out at shoulder level, the sword blade parallel to the ground. The sword is positioned in such a way as to have the point constantly menacing the adversary. The points of the combatants' blades are held in front of each other's sword hilts, and termed *medir las espadas*, literally "measuring the swords." This determines the diameter of the imaginary circle.

In his magnificently illustrated treatise *Académie de l'Espée*, 1628, Girard Thibault, a Dutch master following the Spanish school, determined the diameter of the circle by the distance of the swordsman standing straight with his heels together, extending his arm over his head and pointing up with his index finger. The distance from the ground between his heels to the tip of his index finger is the diameter of the circle. All of the combat occurs within an imaginary circle of that dimension. The circle and the possible angles of attack and defense are etched into the thought process of the *Diestro* after years of theoretical and practical study.

The swordsmen standing at opposite ends of the diameter of the imaginary circle assume their stance. They will then commence to step around each other along the circumference of the circle. The *Diestros* endeavor to maintain the diameter as they walk around the circle because the diameter offers the safest location. If the swordsmen attack along the diameter, impalement on each other's swords would be inevitable. Narvaez states, "*Por la linea del diametro no se puede caminar sin peligro*" (Along the line of the diameter one cannot walk without peril). The attack is always executed at an angle to the adversary, on either side of his blade. They attack or defend by stepping, passing or crossing the circle along chords. The *Diestro* elicits his adversary's responses by strategic movement and repositioning using varied changes in the rhythm, tempo and distance. This is accomplished by sophisticated footwork required for the generalship (command of timing, distance, space and movement) that enables the swordsmen to apply the geometry with effectiveness. Narvaez termed this *llave y gobierno de la destreza* (key and government of *destreza*). The *Diestro* creates the appropriate angle from which to launch an attack, executed while the adversary is moving and most vulnerable.

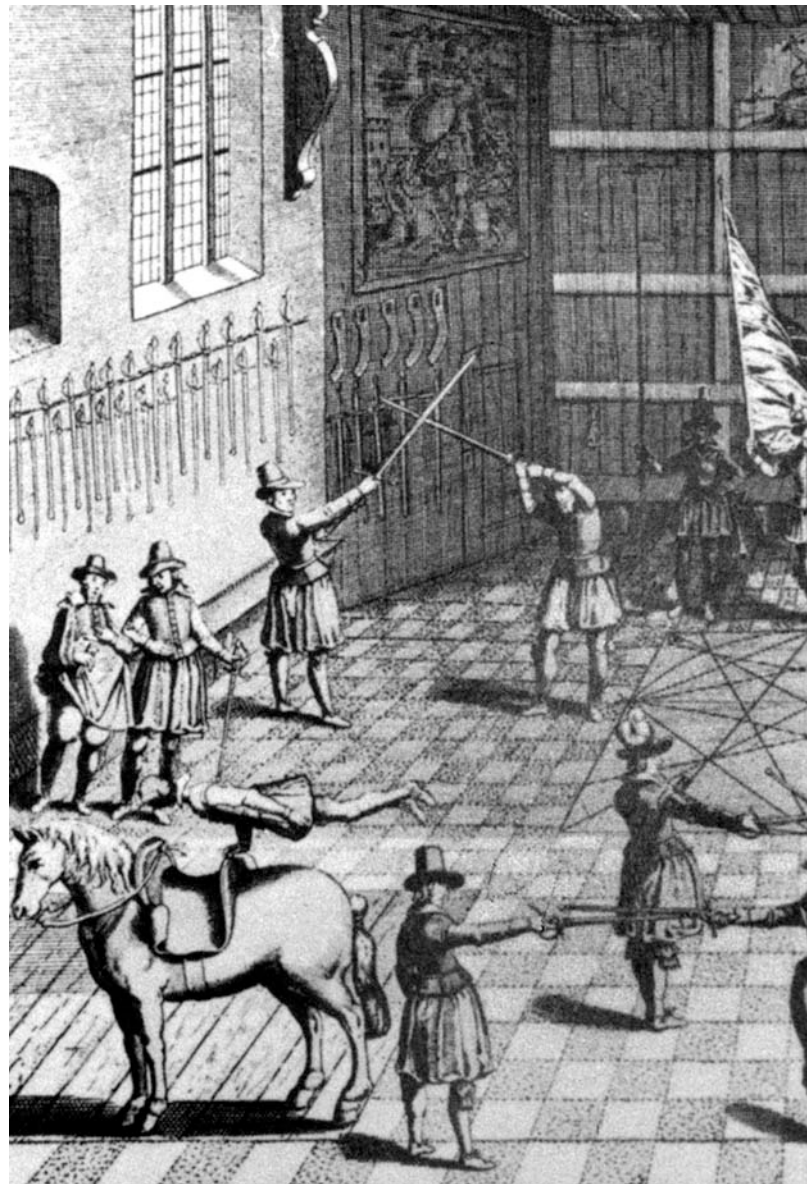
One of the central concepts to the understanding of *La Destreza* is the *movimientos* (movements). These movements are classifications of specific isolated actions of the body or weapon. Carranza analyzed the actions of swordsmen engaged in combat and then divided those actions into the separate movements of which they are comprised. Each technique (*treta*) in *La Destreza* is formed by a combination of *movimientos*. These are learned separately and can be executed in innumerable combinations. Examples are *violento* (sudden upward movement of the sword) and *natural* (deliberate downward movement of the sword). As well as sword movements, there are also specific movements of the feet e.g.: *passo* (the distance from the center of the heels when one foot is moved and not the other) and *passos en genero* (steps that are done alternately walking).

The analysis of movement in *La Destreza* was so precise that its terminology was adopted by the Spanish school of dance that flourished during that era. Dancing was an essential part of the education of a gentleman as was swordsmanship and riding. References to *movimientos* and their relation to the school of dance can be found in the *Discursos Sobre El Arte Del Dancado*, 1642, by dance master Don Juan de Esquivel Navarro. Since

training in *Destreza* was an integral part of the life of a gentleman, Esquivel does not go on to explain the *movimientos*, but rather assumes that the reader already has knowledge of them as part of his training in arms. As in dancing each step (formed by movements) is learned separately and, when performed, the combinations create the dance.

The following is an example of a *treta* composed by *movimientos*. *Diestro A* does two *passos en genero* counter-clockwise along the circumference of the circle, to *Diestro B's* left. When *Diestro A* arrives on point C he then does a *passo* across chord CD of the circle at an angle towards *Diestro B* attacking with a downward slicing cut to the head executed by the movements *violento* and *natural*.

Cuts are classified by the type of movement executed by the swordsman, rather than by the direction that they travel. These are *arrebatar* (from the shoulder), *medio tajo* (from the elbow) and *mandoble* (from the wrist). Thrusts (*estocadas*) are not classified, they are executed from all angles depending on the placement of the weapon and the swordsman's body in relation to that of the adversary. In the defensive manipulation of the weapon *La*



The fencing hall at Leiden University in 1608 clearly displays le circle mysterieux.

*Destreza* clearly defined the defensive techniques as a redirection or rerouting of the offensive weapon by the placement of the *Diestro's* weapon against the adversary's. The positioning of the weapon is not fixed or numerically designated, because it can be applied in an infinite variety of ways.

However, it is required to make contact on the adversary's weak part of the blade with the strong part of the *Diestro's* blade and sword guard. This technique is termed *desvio* (literally to change course, deflect, parry). Spanish treatises constantly emphasize that the control of the opposing weapon must be maintained by *atajo* (taking control of the adversary's blade with one's own, an engagement of opposition). The ability to control the opposing weapon is acquired by cultivating what is termed *tacto*, best described as the sensitivity of the hand in which the weapon is held. This is what enables the *Diestro* to read the strengths, weaknesses and intentions of his adversary through blade contact. *Tacto* is in fact the same as the French term *sentiment du fer* used in smallsword and foil technique, which Thibault refers to as *le sentiment de l'épée*. In order to achieve this *atajo*, the controlling blade must be placed against the opposed

blade at the most efficient position to ensure the maximum leverage and mechanical advantage.

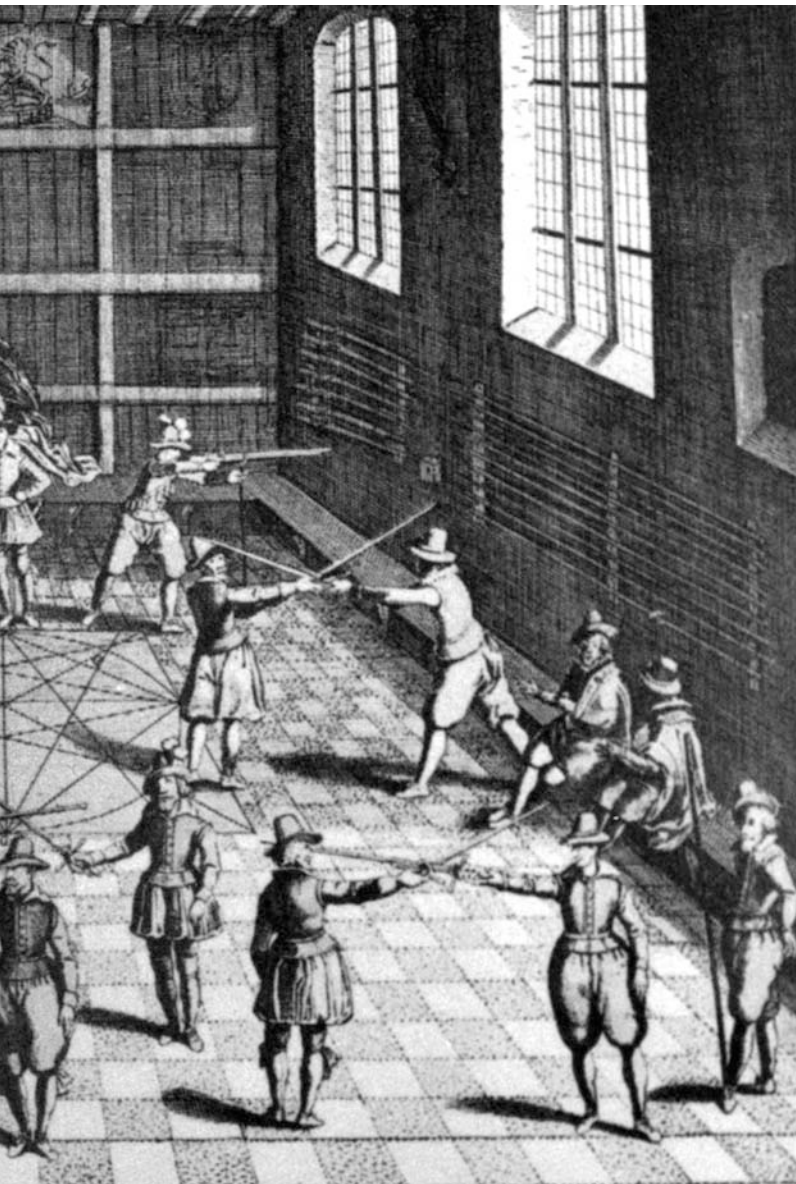
The Italian schools of the same period focused on a pre-conceived standard. Italian treatises, which were well illustrated, collected and classified certain types of attacks (*bottas*) and counter-offensive actions. These techniques along with their associated counter techniques are learned and then practiced in drills. In comparison, the *Diestro* is trained to reason his way through a conflict rather than react in a previously set manner. He learned to instantly apply the geometric reasoning that he had assimilated. In accordance to the changing circumstances of combat. *The Diestro* constantly repositions himself according to his intention, whether it be attack, defense or counter-attack. It is extremely difficult to illustrate this kind of dynamic action and movement. Precisely for this reason Carranza, Narvaez and many of those who followed deliberately did not illustrate their work with many figures. The treatise left by Thibault is the only one to fully illustrate the Spanish school, and the author admonishes the reader that the illustrations are not fixed postures, but dynamic action whose movements have been divided into time segments. Hence the vast variety of pairs of swordsmen engaged in combative sequences.

Thibault's illustration of *le cercle mysterieux* presents many precepts. One of these is the length of the weapon, which is determined by standing straight with feet together and placing the point on the ground between the feet. The sword's length is correct if the cross bar of the hilt intersects with the swordsman's navel. The same illustration shows foiled rapiers—purpose-made practice weapons an example of which, along with the foiled dagger, can be seen in the Victoria & Albert Museum.

The Spanish rapier's evolution reflects the manner of its use. There were many blade designs produced in Spain with a variety of cross-sections. The blade of choice had a diamond-shaped cross-section from at least the middle to the point. This type of blade lent itself to a system that emphasizes both thrust and cut. A stiff diamond-shaped blade offers tremendous penetrating power. In *La Destreza* there is an emphasis on thrusts to the head and face. This type of blade facilitates the point passing through the skull and can deliver an effective cut without being unduly heavy. Cuts in rapier play were not intended to have the same impact or lethal capability as a sword or sabre. For the most part they were utilized in wounding and/or stunning the adversary so that the more lethal thrust could be delivered. Also, good blades taper in width from the strong part of the blade nearest the hilt, terminating in a very sharp point. This type of blade design with its well-distributed overall mass makes a weapon that is extremely maneuverable.

The guard of the weapon evolved from the swept-hilt design to the cup hilt and this also reflects a system that gives consideration to both thrust and cut. The cup hilt, along with its extended cross-bar and knuckle bow, offered more protection to the hand, wrist, forearm and elbow from thrusts as well as cuts.

In the 18th century the Spanish school was still practiced, as is evidenced in books dealing with the smallsword and the French school. In these books, especially in *L'Ecole des Armes*, 1763, by Domenico Angelo and *L'Art des Armes*, 1766 by Danet, advice is given along with admonishments as to the risks involved in encountering a Spanish swordsman. This practical hilt design offers more protection to the extended target (hand and arm) from a weapon that was lighter and faster. The rapier's



longer blade along with the Spanish methodology, presents a considerable difficulty for a swordsman wielding a smallsword. In attempting to close the distance and reach the body, there is the danger of being seriously wounded by either thrust or cut.

The term “mysterious” or “mystic” applied to the description of the circle in Thibault’s treatise that is continually associated with *La Destreza* appears to be a concept that is his own, part of his variations on the Spanish school. Narvaez comments that Thibault has over-complicated the Spanish system.

The importance of the development of the swordsman to higher levels of chivalry and consciousness is stressed by Narvaez in commenting on the master-disciple relationship: “The primary diligence that a master must undertake with his disciple is to know if he is noble and known to be of virtue; because, nobility and virtue always incline towards good and in general those who are noble are of generous spirit not subject to any passion nor disturbed by vain glory, or predisposed towards arrogance.”

The only other work that illustrates *La Destreza* and approaches the scope of Thibault’s is the treatise written much later by the Spanish Master Don Francisco Lorenz

De Rada *Nobleza de la Espada*, 1705. As Narvaez expounds on the system of his mentor Carranza, Rada explains and further clarifies Carranza and Narvaez. It is of interest to note that Rada in his work elaborates further on the explanations of *La Destreza* but not in its execution.

✦ Fin



Domenico Angelo’s *L’Ecole des Armes* displays smallsword versus Spanish rapier.

## Lessons from *Tabula XXXV*

(see page 7)

Two participants, Zachaire and Alexandre, demonstrate the specific movements to be performed in answer to a variety of situations. The accompanying text describes the nuances of the inner workings of Thibault’s system, such as the sensitive fingering of the weapon and the function of the footwork. In the following description of *Tabula XXV*, the reader is guided through the 13 Circles in which Zachaire, always on the left, presents his blade throughout in a similar manner with subtle changes of pressure. Alexandre responds according to the stimulus he receives.

**Circle 1** Zachaire presents his blade and Alexandre steps in and engages. This response is typical of the Spanish school in that one of the major principles is to immediately gain and maintain control of the adversary’s blade. Note that the weight distribution of Alexandre is mostly on his left leg, a basic principle of *La Destreza* being that one is never to be double weighted.

**Circle 2** Alexandre, while maintaining opposition of blade to the outside, brings his right foot forward and delivers a thrust through Zachaire’s head.

**Circle 3** As Alexandre brings his right foot forward, Zachaire disengages and thrusts with full force at chest. Alexandre sees the change in blade positioning and closes the line by meeting his forte to the foible of his adversary’s blade. As Zachaire moves forward Alexandre closes the distance so that Zachaire impales himself.

**Circle 4** Zachaire is in the same position as Circle 1, but holds his hand a bit more to the inside. This minute change in hand position causes Alexandre to engage the blade from underneath without exerting undue pressure or opposition. It is a firm but subtle contact.

**Circle 5** Continuing from Circle 4, Alexandre moves his right foot forward and transports Zachaire’s blade to the inside of his arm, while shifting the position of his body towards the inside in order to add more leverage to his blade pressure.

**Circle 6** Both participants hold the same posture as in Circle 5 with Alexandre opposing his adversary’s blade. Zachaire reduces the pressure and Alexandre responds by leaning his body forward while at the same time releasing Zachaire’s blade and straightening his arm to pierce his adversary through the head.

**Circle 7** This is a variation of Circles 5 and 6. Here Zachaire maintains the blade pressure, causing Alexandre to move his right foot forward while executing a *froissement* on his opponent’s blade. He then performs a *volte* while executing a diagonal cut to the left side of Zachaire’s head.

**Circle 8** This begins as in Circle 5. Both men seek to control each other’s blade. Alexandre, sensing an increase in pressure, relinquishes contact, causing Zachaire’s blade to pass over his head. At the same time, Alexandre steps forward with his left foot, bringing his left shoulder forward

and pulling back his blade to present his point to the right side of his adversary.

**Circle 9** Continuing from Circle 8, Alexandre brings his right shoulder forward and thrusts through the left side of Zachaire’s body.

**Circle 10** This begins as in Circle 1, except that Zachaire is holding his hand higher. Alexandre moves forward slightly to the right, improving the leverage of his blade against that of his adversary.

**Circle 11** Continuing from Circle 10, Alexandre maintains opposition and advances his right foot forward (lunging) to thrust through Zachaire’s head.

**Circle 12** This begins as in Circle 10. Zachaire, feeling the pressure from the engagement, disengages and thrusts at Alexandre’s chest (lunging). Alexandre advances his right foot and closes the line by opposing to the inside. He then thrusts through Zachaire’s face while maintaining opposition.

**Circle 13** As in Circle 12, Alexandre moves his right foot forward with his left following slightly behind, so that he displaces his body while piercing his adversary through the head.

✦ RM

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# The Mysterious Circle



by  
**Anthony De Longis**

*Training in the salon, Adrian Paul (right) and Anthony DeLongis film the "Duende" episode for Highlander, the Series. Co-choreographers Sword Master Braun McAsh and Anthony De Longis labored hard to balance historical inspiration with dynamic character action. Photo courtesy Davis/Panzer Productions, Inc.*

In the sixteenth century no education was considered complete without rigorous training in the only true weapon for a gentleman, the sword. No nation had a more exacting scientific system of weapons training than the deadly Spanish Mysterious Circle.

Part science, part philosophy and metaphysics, the Mysterious Circle was crafted to develop the whole man, mind, body and spirit. The fencing salon was the meeting place for the gentry and their siblings. The master taught the strict gentleman's code and his was the final word on all points of honor. The Mysterious Circle embodies the proudest traditions of Spain: its heart, pride and passion.

If the sword is the soul of the samurai, the Circle is the soul of the fighting Spaniard. Intense training develops lightning reflexes, calm demeanor and cool analysis of every situation. Correct execution of the Mysterious Circle's highly refined techniques was believed by practitioners to all but guarantee victory. Angulation, deflection, and tremendous power generated by body torque are merely some of its secrets.

The master of the Circle seemed to know his opponent's next move as if by magic. The magic was the result of exacting footwork, body angulation and a manipulation of the blade that limited the opponent's options. One guided one's opponent

towards predictable responses by offering fewer opportunities, at the same time baiting him to attack the openings one selected. This made it relatively easy to avoid or counter the opponent's offense and launch a fatal response. The skills, both mental and physical, developed by training on the Circle impact every weapon the practitioner employs or encounters, including swords, pole arms, daggers, cloaks, whips and empty hands.

Jerónimo de Carranza began the evolution of the Mysterious Circle. A reputed escrimador and the inventor of the Science of Arms, de Carranza collected his ideas into two volumes written in 1569, with a second edition in 1600. The Spanish rapier was nearly five feet from hilt to point and cut with both edges. Carranza combined his own experiences with the ideas of his peers, a ragged but haughty group of adventurers whose very existence depended on their consummate skill with their prodigious rapiers.

*The Verdadera Destreza*, the true art of the fence, in the opinion of the Spaniards found its complete exposition in *Libro de las Grandezas de la Espada*, (*The Book of the Grandeur of the Sword*) written in 1600 by Don Luis Pacheco De Narvaez, a pupil of Carranza. As a result of this rather ponderous work, Narvaez became the acknowledged arbiter on all questions of import to a true cavalier and personified the typ-

ical figure of Spanish solemnity. As late as the middle of the eighteenth century, the *espada* most in favor among Spaniards was, for all practical purposes, the rapier of the seventeenth century with its cutting edges, cup guard and long quillons.

The last champion of the *Cercle Mystereux* was French fencing master Girard Thibault. His treatise, *The Academy of the Sword* (1628), a huge magnificently illustrated tome, took fifteen years to produce and magnificently illustrated the geometric virtues and metaphysical philosophies inspired by Carranza and Narvaez.

Not all descriptions of the Spanish system of fence have been complimentary about the system. In *Schools and Masters of Fence* Castle states, "Whilst the Italians, and after their example, the French, Germans, and English, gradually discovered that simplification led to perfection, the Spanish Masters, on the contrary, seemed to aim at making fencing a more and more mysterious science requiring for its practice a knowledge of geometry and natural philosophy, and whose principles were only explainable on metaphysical grounds."

By Narvaez's calculation, the various parts of two human bodies in opposition can form eighty-three different angles. There was a natural belief in the absolute infallibility of a system so elaborately worked out in all its aspects. In spite of its aggressive complexity, the system had considerable merit. For more than a century, the Spanish swordsman was respected and feared as a formidable and deadly opponent. Master Domenico Angelo, in his 1787 publication *The Schools of Fencing*, devoted special attention to the dangers of facing the Spanish Guard.

Training in the Circle teaches distance in absolute terms. Action outside its dimensions poses no threat. At one's invitation, an opponent enters one's killing zone. Distance is stiflingly close and immediate. It requires only three inches of steel to get the job done. The lines of the Circle define the most direct routes to strike one's enemy's vitals, to maim, disable or instantly kill. When positioned at the Circle's center, a master can control several opponents simultaneously. Like the spokes of a wheel, the Circle offers a road map that returns multiple attacks from any direction with deadly efficiency. One just follows the lines.

The eighteenth century fencing master Angelo offered this description of the Spanish system of combat in his *The School of Fencing*.

*The Spaniards have in fencing a different method to all other nations; they are fond often to give a cut to the head, and immediately after deliver a thrust between the eyes and the throat. Their guard is almost straight, their longe (lunge) is very small; when they come in distance they bend the right knee and straighten the left, and carry the body forward: when they retire, they bend the left knee and straighten the right, they throw the body back well, in a straight line with that of the antagonist, and parry with the left hand, or flip the right foot behind the left.*

*Their swords are near five feet long from hilt to point, and cut with both edges; the shell is very large, and behind it is crossed with a small bar, which comes out about two inches on each side; they make use of this to wrench the sword out of the adversary's hand, by bind-*

*ing or crossing his blade with it, especially when they fight against a long sword; but it would be very difficult for them to execute this against a short sword. Their ordinary guard is with their wrist in tierce, and the point in a line with the face. They make appels or attacks on the foot, and also half thrusts to the face, keep their bodies back, and form a circle with the point of their swords to the left, and straightening their arm, they advance their body to give the blow on the head, and recover instantly to their guard, quite straight, with their point in a direct line to their adversary's face.*

The Spanish Mysterious Circle refines these principles to high art. By constantly menacing with the point, the center line is maintained by the extended blade and the body offers the smallest of vulnerable targets. The opponent is faced with a dilemma. To reach his foe, he must somehow avoid or remove the ever threatening blade. The Spanish practitioner coolly waited for his man to commit his body and weapon to an attack. This he avoided by stepping forward or back on an angle, then countered with superior blade leverage, facilitated by his knowledge of geometry and physics, to control the central line. He simply angled his body and blade to shift center and establish a new line which he dominated. The attacker literally impaled himself on the Spaniard's extended point.

Angelo offers a defence to the Spanish guard to defeat a attempt to cut to the head in *The School of Fencing*.

*If you make use of a sword of common length, and if you can but stand the first attack, you will easily defend yourself against a Spaniard, and will be very little embarrassed by his play or method.*

*You ought to put yourself in guard out of distance, with your wrist turned in tierce, holding it a little higher than in the ordinary guard, with great coolness, nor answer any motion he may make or attempt. If he should attempt the cut on the head, you should parry it with a high tierce. still raising your wrist and bending your body, and close in about a foot or more; after which briskly return a full stretched out thrust in seconde, with your point lower than common in that thrust, that he may not be able to parry it with his left hand. The thrust being made, recover instantly to a tierce, and traversing the line to the right, with a forcibly opposed wrist seek his sword again; at the same time bring up your right foot to your left, to throw off his point: so will you be enabled to get ground to advantage with the left foot. If the adversary makes a thrust to the face or body, you must parry it by disengaging from tierce to carte, keeping your wrist in a line with the shoulder, and at the same time close in a full foot, to get within his blade as much as possible, and to be able to return a thrust in carte. If he wants to parry with his left hand, you must feint on it, making at the same time an appel of the foot, to haulk his left handed parade, and finish your thrust according to the forementioned rules; recover quickly your sword, with your point to his face, and redouble a low carte. This done, recover to a guard, carrying your right foot behind your left.*

*Though it seems easy for the short sword to disarm the long sword after you have the advantage of getting within his blade, I would nevertheless advise nobody to attempt it, for fear you should not be able to reach the shell of his sword, or for fear of having your fingers cut by the edges of it.*

*I also would not advise anybody to cross or bind, or to beat on their blades, because the Spaniards, when they draw their swords, pass the two first fingers through two small rings which are near the shell, and with the two others and the thumb they have a fast hold of their gripe: therefore it is evident that none of these last mentioned operations would be successful.*

— AD

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Assuming *contra-guardia* positions, Anthony De Longis & Adrian Paul duel in the rain in "Duende" for Highlander, the Series. Photo: Davis/Panzer Productions, Inc.

The weapons were long and double edged, narrowing to a sharp point. The hand was guarded by a shell or cup, often with an upturned edge to catch the adversary's blade. The quillons, or cross-guards, extended horizontally beyond the guard to facilitate controlling the opponent's weapon when binding his blade. They also increased the Spaniard's leverage to force his adversary's point out of line and ensure his own successful counter thrust.

The prevailing footwork, or compasses, were basic and simple. They consisted of the *pasada*, a short advancing step of about twenty-four inches, the *pasade simple* (about thirty inches), and the *pasada doble*, consisting of two *pasada* stepped with alternate feet. The most approved method was to advance with *pasadas* at an obtuse angle with the diameter of the Circle, always menacing with the point while avoiding all violent movements. Attacks, or *ganacia*, were delivered with the point and both cutting edges.

Cuts were delivered from *tajo* or forehand (in Italian, *mandritti*) and *reves* or reverse (in Italian, *roversi*) with varying degrees of arm movement and strength. *Arrebatar* meant to cut with the whole arm from the shoulder. *Medio tajo* was a cut from the elbow. *Mandoble* was a cut delivered very near the point by means of a flip of the wrist. Cuts were delivered on the downward vertical or *fendente* and the upward vertical or *mantante*. Cuts were also made on the diagonal lines as well as the *tondo*, or horizontal plane from either the fore or backhand side.

The back or *dritto* edge of the blade was also put to good use. A *falso dritto*, was an ascending forty-five degree angle cut with the back edge aimed at the left leg and the hand in pronation (palm down). Similarly, *falso manco*, was an under hand ris-

ing back edge cut with the hand in supination (palm up) aimed at the right leg.

Two other sixteenth century rapier techniques are the *squalambrat* and the *stramazone*. In *Opera Nova*, Achille Marozzo defines the *mandritti squalambratto* as a downward cut to the head and recommends defending with the buckler. Later references refer to the *sgualambrat/sgalambratta*, as an oblique cut in either supination or pronation delivered with either the inside or the outside edge of the blade. Braun McAsh, a colleague, favors the rising angle, after first feinting to head to draw the parry. A quick twist of the wrist to either supination or pronation, instantly flips the tip of the blade upward into the groin or inner thigh, a nasty surprise that can ruin one's day. The *stramazone* or *stramazello* is a tearing cut with the tip of the weapon, made with the point and not the edge of the blade. Rolling the wrist and palm from pronation to supination or vice versa, rakes the point across the nearest target, administering minor but significant wounds from extremely long range.

Thrusts or *estocada*, were given with a stab or quick extension of the arm due to the nature of the passing attack and were delivered either *imbrocatta* (over the arm), or *stocatta* (under the arm of the opponent). The *stesso tempo* (single time), the parry and counter attack combined, was the soul of a fight with long rapiers. The position of the hand in supination or pronation added considerably to the leverage on the blade initiated by the angulation of the body and the position of the contacted blades. In fact, a favorite technique, the *punto reverso* defeats an attempted parry in *seconde* by lunging to the left across center line and turning the palm upwards into supination to drive the blade

around and through the defender's blade.

Another much employed technique was called variously *inquarta*, *inquartata* and *inquarto*. This was a combination of foot work, body movement and blade leverage sometimes referred to as *pris de fer*, or taking of the blade. The *inquartata* called for a displacement of the body from the line of attack by pivoting on the leading heel while simultaneously throwing the rear (left) leg backwards and sideways to the right. The body was removed from danger but the defending blade was left in center line to contact and oppose the adversary's sword. The more fierce the attack, the faster the aggressor impaled himself.

Another favorite, the *passata sotto*, was a stop hit in the low line. Against an aggressive attack in the high line, the defender dropped his entire body under the opponent's blade and threw his left leg diagonally to the right while supporting himself with his left hand on the ground. Proper timing was essential.

By applying the principles and tech-

niques of Filipino Kali, the veils of mystery start to lift. The triangular footwork

Tim Weske, the Sword Master at Sword Play Fencing Studios in Burbank, is so impressed with the simple truths of this system, he now incorporates many of its basic principles into his teaching methods. Weske describes the Circle as "a game of patience and precision. It puts you in *the Bubble*. You are absolutely alone in the world with your opponent at that exact moment. You must have patience, every action must be perfect, as if you were actually risking your life."

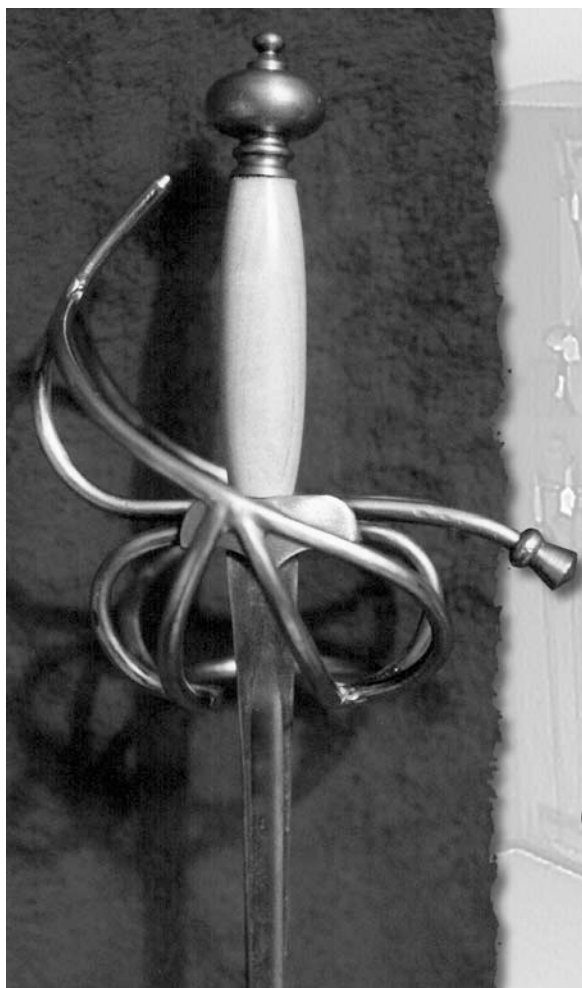
Weske also favors the practical aspects of the system. *Training in the Circle cultivates both the body mind or muscle memory and the brain. The brain plans and sets the traps. Then the body mind delivers with simple, exacting precision. At first the Mysterious Circle appears very complex, but it is as simple as building a wall which your opponent encounters. The Circle acts like a funnel, guiding your weapon to your opponent's target. His blade is enveloped or deflected and he literally impales himself on your point. It also teaches you to relax, plan and effectively execute.*

Anthony Delongis, "The Martial Art of Zorro" *Inside Karate*  
Vol. 19, Issue 7 July 1998

possibilities and checking hand applications, especially those provided by a second weapon such as the dagger, leap

out. Indeed, the *espada y daga* techniques of the Filipino masters have obvious roots in the intricacies of the Spanish sword stylings. During the four hundred years of Spanish occupation of the Philippine Islands, the blending of cultures and martial styles and techniques was inevitable.

Ferdinand Magellan brought the first exposure of the European style of sword fighting to the Philippines, losing his life in a battle with Raja Lapu Lapu and his warriors on Mactan Island on April 27, 1521. Jeronimo de Carranza wrote his definitive text on sword-play, *Libro que Trata de la Filosofia de las Armas* (Book on the Philosophy of Arms) in 1582. His pupil and disciple, Don Luis Pacheco de Narvaez formalized the Myterious Circle and the *verdadera destreza*, the true art of fence, in his volume *Libra de las Grandezas de la Espada* (The Book of the Greatness of the Sword) published in 1600. The Filipino fighter could not avoid exposure to European



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combat techniques throughout the years of Spanish settlement and occupation from 1571 until the Philippine Revolution in 1896. It is natural that these ideas, as well as the later evolutions of European sword combat would be absorbed and incorporated into the martial arts of the Philippines. One can deduce that Filipino martial artists took a long and careful look at Spanish sword techniques, absorbing what was useful and adapting the knowledge to suit their own weapons and temperament.

As a matter of record, prior to the Philippine revolution of 1896, Don Jose de Azes operated a school of Spanish fencing and Filipino *eskrima* called *Tanghalan ng Sandata* (Gallery of Weapons) in Manila. It was located inside the Ateneo de Manila, the Jesuit high school where the upper-class teenagers of Manila received their education. Philippine national hero Rizal y Mercado graduated from the Ateneo de Manila before studying medicine, philosophy, literature and fencing at the University of Madrid. The knowledge of the European sword arts was definitely there for the taking.

The Spanish cuts delivered as *tajo*

(forehand) and *reves* (reverse) are at a range similar to Kali's *largo mano*. The flipping cuts from the left and the right, the *medio tajo* and *medio reves* sound very much like a fan attack in Kali. The *medio tajo* or cut from the elbow, is the *redondo* found in many systems of Kali and the *mandoble*, the cut delivered very near the point by means of a flip of the wrist, is similar to the fanning motion of a Kali *abanico*. It is also interesting to note that the Filipino style called *estokada* in Togalong is very thrust oriented like the Spanish style. The Spanish *ganacia* is described by the Italians as *g u a d a - gnare di Spada* or covering oneself on

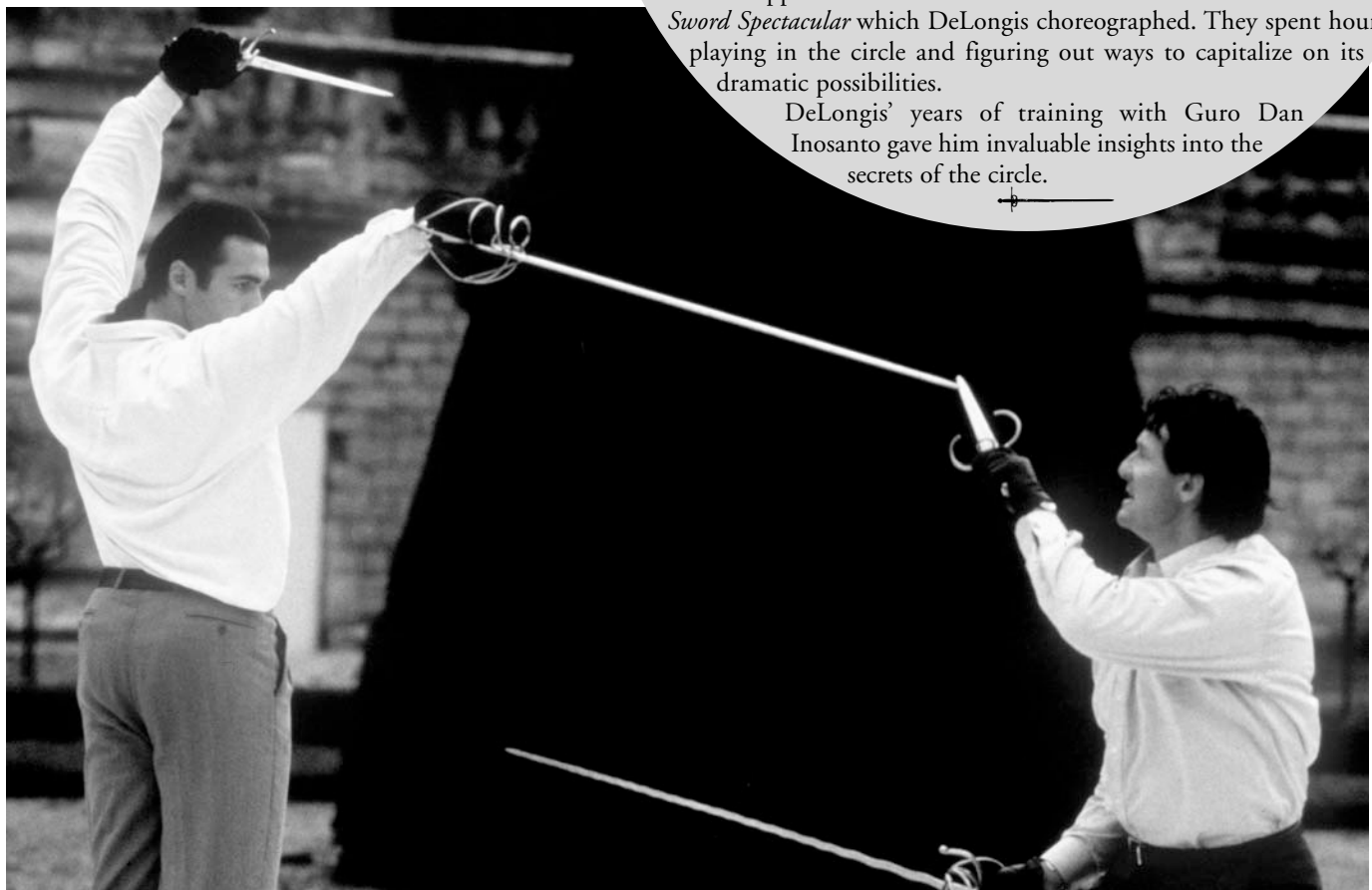
the march by forcibly engaging the adversary's blade is again reminiscent of Filipino Kali. Evading with the body by angulation and picking up the blade on counter attack perfectly blends the combination of Filipino and Spanish fighting techniques.

— Fin

In studying the Spanish system of fence, the author read the sparse selection of available texts and questioned two of his most knowledgeable friends, Nick Evangelista and F. Braun McAsh. Nick was the assistant to Delongis' old fencing instructor of a dozen years, Master Ralph Faulkner. In addition, Nick wrote *The Encyclopedia of the Sword* and *The Art and Science of Fencing*. Braun McAsh was the Sword Master on *Highlander: The Series*, for the last five of its six highly successful seasons. McAsh also studied at the Tower of London Armory and translated the original texts of many of the Renaissance fencing masters before writing his own treatise on the art of fighting with the rapier.

DeLongis also had the help of several sword pals. Tim Weske, owner and head instructor of Sword Play Fencing Studios in Burbank, volunteered both his studio and his knowledge of the blade. Weske and DeLongis collaborated on several projects, including choreographing the duels for *Almost Heroes*, with Mathew Perry and Chris Farley. Dave Baker, instructor of stage combat at Sword Play, constructed the Mysterious Circle and helped DeLongis visualize the system in three dimensions. Joe Nassi, a friend and fellow actor, added his creative eye to the mix. Nassi and DeLongis worked together on a number of projects over the years and Nassi appeared as the double swordsman in Universal Studios *Conan Sword Spectacular* which DeLongis choreographed. They spent hours playing in the circle and figuring out ways to capitalize on its dramatic possibilities.

DeLongis' years of training with Guro Dan Inosanto gave him invaluable insights into the secrets of the circle.



*Highlander, the Series' star Adrian Paul and guest villain Anthony De Longis execute double fence contra-postura guards in "Duende." Photo: Davis/Panzer Prod., Inc.*

**G**irard Thibault, the author of the most extensive and detailed explanation on the art of fencing ever published, *Académie de l'Espée* (*Academy of the Sword*) was a noted fencer, scholar of medicine, painter and architect. Gerard Thibault (or Geraldo as he preferred the French form of his name) was born in Antwerp around 1574. He was a son of a merchant Hendrick Thibault and his second wife Margaretha van Nispen. Hendrick was the scion of a well-known family in Ypres, lived in Ghent and Antwerp before eventually settling in Middelburg. There is literally no information on Thibault's childhood, upbringing, or education. Most of what is known about him comes from his *Album Amicorum*<sup>1</sup> and his book *Académie de l'Espée*.

In 1605 Girard Thibault was living in Sanlucar de Barrameda south of Seville, the birthplace of Jeronimo de Carranza. As a merchant, Thibault traded in wool which was shipped to Italy, Flanders and Amsterdam. Despite his poor health it was while living in Spain that Thibault took an intense interest in fencing. He was very adept at a new method being taught by Luis Pacheco de Narvaez known as the mystic circle or as Shakespeare called it "fencing by the booke of arithmetic." Thibault refined Narvaez's method even further and elaborated on it to its utmost limits.

Returning to Amsterdam to take care of his father's inheritances in 1610, he presented himself and his system of fence in 1611 to the Dutch fencing masters in Rotterdam at one of their competitions.<sup>2</sup> Thibault demonstrated his new rules and actually won first place at the competition. He was invited to court along with other Dutch fencing-masters, to present his new rules to Prince Maurice. Thibault emerged victorious, receiving a prize and trophy from the Prince.

Thibault's demonstrations resulted in a great deal of excitement among the Dutch masters, one of whom was his first teacher, Lambert van Someren.<sup>3</sup> Some of the older masters were skeptical of Thibault's new method and wrote poems about it. Fencers flocked to Thibault for lessons and social circles were opened to him. Thibault saw himself as a rival to the Italian Salvator Fabris and Thibault wanted to publish a book to outdo Fabris' folio which had

## Girard Thibault



by Raymond Delgato

been published in Denmark in 1606.

To publicize his new methods and the book he was preparing, Thibault gave several commissions to the engraver Michel le Bon in 1615. Le Bon engraved two emblematic prints in praise of fencing and three smaller prints which Thibault handed out to his friends and pupils. The two larger prints, in praise of fencing, were from designs made by Thibault.

In December 1615 Thibault announced he was leaving Amsterdam to go to the court at Cleves where he again demonstrated his new fencing methods. In the autumn of 1617 Thibault left Cleves and in November was in Leiden. In 1618 he was back in Amsterdam where he had engravings made showing the positions and stances in fencing which were later used in *Académie de l'Espée*.

In February of 1622, Thibault, who was over 40 years of age, enrolled at the University of Leiden to study mathematics and may have taught fencing there. He continued to prepare his fencing book, edit text and have prints engraved by an international team of engravers. He continued to demonstrate his fencing skills at the Hague, Cleves, Paris, Brunswick and Lippe.

Thibault died in 1627, the exact date, place, and cause unknown, never seeing his life's work published. Judging from the dedication page of the *Académie de l'Espée* Thibault must have died sometime during the first five months of 1627. The title page along with the central illustration suggests the book deals with the use of weapons both on foot and on horseback, the second part, the use of weapons on horseback, was never completed. The date on the frontispiece is 1628 while the actual publication date may have been 1630.<sup>4</sup>

The *Académie de l'Espée* is one of the most lavish and artistic fencing books to come out of the seventeenth century. The large folio format, the heavy paper, the magnificent printing by Bonaventura and Abraham Elzevir, the rich and varied illustrations with forty-six prints spread over two facing pages--all stamp the book as a truly regal publication. The actual physical production of the book, the engravings, composition and printing must have demanded a great deal of time and energy. Sixteen Flemish

## Salvator Fabris

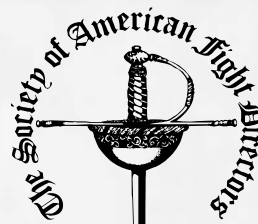
**S**alvator Fabris (1544-1617) was an Italian Master from Padua. He crystallized the whole Science of Fence, both in theory and practice, as understood in the later part of the sixteenth century, as well as contributing new ideas. He was a sound theorist and practitioner with wide experience having traveled in Germany, France and Spain studying with Meyer, Saint Didier and Carranza. In Italy he was undoubtedly familiar with the work of Agrippa, Viggiani and Grassi. In the 1590s he went to Denmark at the invitation of Christian IV, a great devotee of the science of arms, and taught at the Danish

Court. His *treatise, Scienza e Pratica d'Arme* (About Fencing or Rather the science of Arms by Salvatore Fabris, Head of the Order of the Seven Hearts) was published in Copenhagen in 1606 under the patronage of Christian IV. The book consisted of 250 folio pages and 190 plates foreshadowing all the refinements and simplifications of the seventeenth century. Fabris insisted on the thrust. With the reduction in weight and the better balance of the rapier leading to better mobility, there was an increase in the use of defense. Various guard positions and body attitudes, the engagement of blades, the disengage, feints, parries and

counter-attacks all evolved with the new mobility of the lighter rapier. Fabris' treatise is divided into two books and six parts in which he deals with the practical problems of combat with the rapier versus rapier, dagger and sword, cloak versus sword and dagger, and sword versus pike or halberd. While it is a detailed fencing manual with text and illustrations devoted to practical swordsmanship, it avoided the philosophical interpolation common to the genre. The work was so successful that five editions were published and many translations and adaptations were made in the seventeenth century. — RD

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**Richard Lane's Swashbuckling Book**  
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engravers signed the book, proof of the tremendous skills of the Dutch printers, then the best in the world, and the virtuosity of the Dutch engravers, who set the style for all others.

Since the printer's name does not appear in the book, it must have been commissioned and paid for by Thibault and his family who acted as publishers. The princely personages whose arms are included in the book all had Thibault's art demonstrated to them, and it is believed that they expressed their approval and paid tribute to him by contributing funds to make the publication of this extremely expensive book possible.

All copies contain nine leaves of arms of the book's patrons. They include King Louis XIII of France; Joachim Sigismund of Brandenburg, Duke of Cleves and his elder brother George William, Elector of Brandenburg; Prince Maurice; Christian, Duke of Brunnschwic-Luneburg and brothers Simon and Otto, counts of Lippe; Frederick Henry; Stephan Gans, Baron of Potlitz and Wolfshagen and Ernest Casimir, Stadtholder of Friesland.

All but one of the book's illustrations are double spread. They show the stances and grips used by fencers in Thibault's system. There is a variety of clothing worn by the figures, as well as a variety of stances and backgrounds depicted in the illustrations. These illustrations, done by sixteen different engravers, were from designs presumably made by Thibault himself.

The book begins with an introduction in which the doctrine of the proportions of the human body are discussed. Thibault gives a laborious exposition of his theory and devotes his second chapter to polemics with Albrecht Durer.

The basis of the system is the Mystic Circle, complete with diameters, chords, and tangents, enclosed in a square. The circle is drawn on a flat piece of ground with chalk, using the rapier as a pair of compasses, the hilt being used as the point in the center and the blade drawing the line. The length of the rapier is determined in proportion to the physical stature of the fencers. After the points of intersection have been numbered, the contestants step forward and take up position opposite each other at the end of the diameter.

This is the *first position*. In the *second position* one contestant moves to the next intersection on his left, the other to the next on his right. As long as they continue to *traverse* in this fashion they cannot hit each other. However, as soon as one or the other moves too far or too little to one side, his inattention is rewarded with a lunge in the eye or through his body.

In the first book this system is worked out in the smallest detail. The second book discusses the ways of defending oneself effectively with only a rapier against an opponent who is also using a poinard or buckler.

The marketing of the book must have been done by Thibault's heirs. Without the author there to use his persuasive powers for publicity, the book was too large and too expensive to have met with much success. In 1665 an inventory shows a large number of unbound copies. How long Thibault's theories survived him in practice are unknown. His name is mentioned with great respect in many later works, but the practice of the mystic circle is not. Egerton Castle, a nineteenth-century authority on fencing, described the book as the "most elaborate treatise on swordsmanship" as well as being "one of the most marvelous printed works extant."

---

**Thibault's contributions to the world of fencing is fondly remembered in a poem by Bredero Aan mijn heer Tibout.**

*Thus, Thybout, in a happy hour we met,  
And formed the friendship which I treasure yet.  
You, with your powerful arguments, put paid  
To every artful claim your rivals made,  
And with such force that, by your eloquence,  
All earlier doctrines lost significance.  
You it was who the skills of many lands,  
Stored in your brain, transmitted to our hands;  
And who in our brains, full of futile wars,  
Inscribed with golden tongue your own true laws,  
Whose letters, by experience imprinted,  
And by their essential rightness implemented,  
With pleasing proof of being your rules, too,  
Forced all to hail your wisdom and see through  
The errors of the past: you put to school  
Our slipshod stances and imposed your rule.*

---

**FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> It was the custom in the seventeenth century to collect expressions of friendship and respect of pupils by having them make notations in an album (*album amicorum*) with their autograph, a motto, some quotation, or a personal wish. The family coat of arms would be displayed on the opposite page. It is from these notations in Thibault's *album amicorum* that scholars are able to piece together specifics about his life.

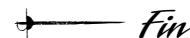
<sup>2</sup> Since 1584 the Dutch had a system of free-fencing masters. To be granted the title of fencing master, one had to train with a recognized master and then be examined in a public contest by the aldermen of the city before receiving the title of master. After proving oneself in the public contest, one was admitted and sworn by the magistrate to give classes using the long sword and the "courtly arts of fencing and dueling."

<sup>3</sup> Someren had taught in Antwerp from 1564-1589 while serving Maurice and the Swedish kings Charles IX and Gustavus Adolphus.

<sup>4</sup> John Michael Greer in his translation of Thibault's *Academy of the Sword* states that the work was originally published in 1630 and the 1628 date was placed there in "premature optimism."

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**Thibault's Emblematic Prints**



The first emblematic print depicts the mathematical world order as Thibault saw it. Arranged in geometrical figures are the four elements, the six planets, the twelve signs of the zodiac and the four points of the compass. In the center is Jupiter with a foil before him and as his other attributes are lightning and a lance. Standing on a tortoise with a hart behind him, he is flanked by an ape and a dog. Hovering above his head is Thibault's coat of arms.

The second print is the whole of Olympus with Mars on the left and Jupiter on the right in their triumphal chariots. These two emblematic prints were later copied in a large format by other engravers and used for the title-prints on the second book.

The first of the three smaller prints shows the family arms in full glory and an empty cartouche.

The second is a graphic visiting-card with his motto *Gaudet Patientia Duris* and his name. At the top of the broad border there is a hunting scene and at the bottom a rider with a pistol. On either side are Minerva and Mercury and in the four corners are illustrations of measuring instruments, musical instruments, weapons and purses indicating Thibault as a mathematician, musician, fencer and merchant.

The third engraving is a statement of Thibault's philosophy with the central figure Jupiter and above his head the mathematical instruments with the Archangel Michael slaying Satan in the broad border at the top. At the bottom centered are the *Horatii* and *Curiaii* in combat and to the left and right are the qualities which a warrior must possess: virtue, reason, valor, wisdom, moderation and steadfastness.

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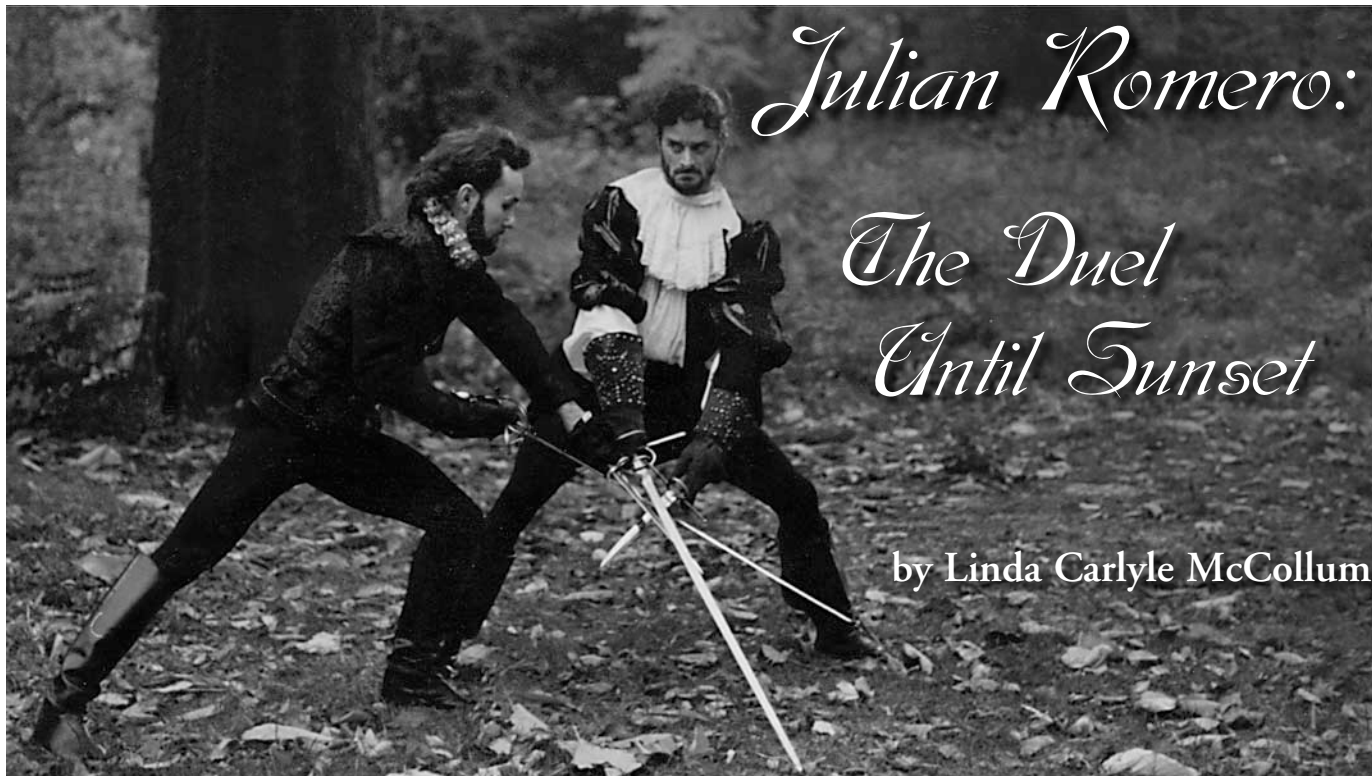
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# Julian Romero:

## The Duel Until Sunset

by Linda Carlyle McCollum

*Nationalities clash at the New Jersey Renaissance Festival as Don Alonzo (Scott Nice) battles Sir Francis Drake (Richard Clark). Fights by Ian Rose. Photo by Clifford Herbst.*

Spanish influence in England was especially heavy during the reign of Queen Mary while her husband, Philip of Spain lived in England with his Spanish retinue. Spanish courtiers brought their own servants as well as an indeterminate number of artisans and hangers-on. It is said that there were four Spaniards to every Englishman on the streets of London during this time, much to the discomfort of the English.

But Spaniards had lived and worked in England for years. Spanish mercenaries fought alongside and for the English and were entertained and rewarded at court.<sup>1</sup> One of the most famous of these Spaniards was Julian Romero who is immortalized in a painting by El Greco and in a play by Lope de Vega.

He was born of very humble origins in Huelamo in the province of Cuenca. Even though he would later obtain high command and be on close intimate terms with nobles and ministers, he was never addressed as a Don because of his humble origins. In the winter of 1534 Romero, who was but a boy, joined the Spanish expedition against the Moors as a foot soldier. He drifted from Spain to Tunis to Italy and on to Flanders and to France. Nothing specifically is known about these early years of service.

Ten years later at the beginning of 1544, Henry VIII of England entered into an alliance with Spain to jointly attack the King of France. Henry himself landed at Calais in July to take command of his army before Boulogne. His chief military adviser was the Spanish noble Beltran de la Cueva, the third Duke of Albuquerque. Besides the two hundred Spanish soldiers who followed Cueva, three Spanish captains, each with a company of seasoned Spanish veterans from the continental wars, were in Henry's service. These Spaniards together with the less experienced English levies, succeeded in capturing Boulogne in September. When Charles V came to terms with the French, Henry made a hasty retreat back to England putting all his forces at Boulogne under Lord Grey. All through the next year the French siege of Boulogne

went on against the three companies of Spanish mercenaries defending Boulogne. The Spanish complained bitterly about the Englishmen's habit of killing prisoners instead of holding them for ransom. Captain Salablanca said to Lord Grey. "How now do you think we are in the King's service for the wretched four *ducats* a month we earn? Not so my lord; we serve with the hope of taking prisoners and getting ransom. Your men have even now killed a gentleman of mine for whom I should have got at least five or six thousand crowns ransom." Whatever the Spaniards motivation may have been in serving the English king, Henry thought very highly of the Spanish mercenaries.

In 1545, when Henry was about to send Warwick to attack the Scots, he seized upon an opportunity to engage some more Spanish mercenaries. With the peace of Crespi, Charles V disbanded a large portion of his army and sent them back to Spain. A ship with nearly a thousand of these disbanded soldiers, detained at Downs due to the weather, decided to offer their services to the King of England. The captain put in at Plymouth and the soldiers landed and entered the English service. They were promptly sent off to Warwick's army in Scotland under the command of Pedro Gamboa, an experienced old soldier whom Henry had made colonel and given the power to create his own captains.

Julian Romero landed with this force in some subordinate capacity, but on his arrival in Scotland, received his commission as captain from Gamboa. This was in the summer of 1545. When winter came, the troops were put into quarters while Gamboa and his captains went back to London and spent time at Court with Henry. In the early spring of 1546 when a temporary peace was made with Scotland the Spaniards were ordered to the French coast between Calais and Boulogne where the English were erecting a fort. When Gamboa, Romero and the other new captains arrived straight from Henry's Court, there were some very bitter feelings from the Spanish commanders who had remained at Boulogne in Henry's service all

this time. One of the old captains, Cristobal de Mora, deserted with his men to the enemy; and, another, Juan de Haro, was killed in attempting to desert. When peace came in June of 1546, there was a good deal of thumb-biting and recriminations. Mora was flouted in the streets by his fellow-countrymen for having disgraced the mercenary creed by deserting his employer before the enemy. Mora retorted by accusing Gamboa and his friends of disobeying the Emperor by taking service under an excommunicated heretic. Things came to a head in July when Mora sent a challenge from Montreuil to Colonel Gamboa in Calais. Either because of the disparity in age or rank, or hot-headed combativeness, Julian Romero accepted the challenge. Reports by Wriothesley and Hollingshead indicate that it was Romero's calling Mora a traitor for his desertion that provoked the challenge.

As soon as his challenge had been accepted, Mora went to the King of France who ordered the construction of the lists at Montreuil. Sir Henry Knyvett went to England to obtain Henry's permission for the duel which was gladly given, along with "a thousand broad angels sent to Julian to put himself in order withal." When all was ready Julian Romero left Calais for Montreuil, attended by a company of English and Spanish gentlemen.

A description of the duel has been recorded.

*... when they arrived in France and the day being come the seconds and umpires saw that each one had equal arms. They were to fight on horseback and each one had a sword, and both rapiers and daggers, and their corselets were open at the back with great holes big enough for two fists to go in on both pieces. This scheme was invented by the French because Mora had one of the best and quickest horses in France, and as they were not to fight with lance, Mora thought, with the fleetness of his horse, he would be able to wound Julian in the back with his rapier, and so vanquish him.*

*When the umpires had seen the arms were equal they gave the signal for the trumpets to sound, and the opponents at once closed with one another, and, at the first blow with the swords, Julian's sword fell from his hands and he seized his rapier. Mora was not backward and threw away his sword for his rapier; and, as he had such an active horse, he went circling round Julian so as to wound him in the back. But Julian was no sluggard, and when Mora saw he could not do this, he decided to kill Julian's horse, which he did with a thrust in the chest, and a few moments afterwards it fell to the ground. At that moment Julian, thinking to do the same for Mora, attacked him with that object; but Mora was too quick with his horse for Julian to wound it, and the rapier fell from Julian's hand, almost at the moment that his horse dropped under him, and as he felt his horse was going to fall he leapt quickly off his back and Mora had not time to ride him down, thanks to the horse which was on the ground. Julian to escape being ridden down, and finding himself armed only with his dagger, was forced to shield himself behind his fallen horse, whilst Mora went round and round and Julian dodged behind the horse. This went on for more than three hours, and at last Mora cried out, "Surrender, Julian! I do not want to kill thee!" but Julian did not answer a word. There was hardly an hour of daylight left, and Julian would be vanquished at sunset. And, as he saw that Mora was strutting about waiting for the sun to go down, Julian kept wide awake and, watching his opportunity, dropped on one knee behind his prostrate horse and with his dagger cut*

*the straps of his spurs, which he threw away. Seeing his rapier not far from him he made a dash to regain it, and succeeded before Mora could ride him down.*

*The gentleman who was acting as Julian's second, seeing how things were going, was very downcast and wished he never had come and said to the Spanish captains: "Gentlemen, our man is losing." Then said Captain Cristobal Diaz, "What, sir! the day is not yet done and I still hope to God that Julian will come off the victor." "Do you not see, sir," said the other, "that Mora is only flourishing about waiting for sundown! As they were chatting thus, they saw how Julian had snatched up his rapier again, and how Mora was attacking him. Julian had just time to deal a thrust at Mora's horse, which, feeling itself wounded began to prance, and its rider, fearing that it would fall with him underneath it, determined to get a short distance away and dismount. Julian, however, being on foot and light, without his spurs, went running after him, and when he was trying to dismount, embraced him in such a manner as to bring him to the ground, and with his dagger cut the ties of his helmet. Mora then surrendered at once, and Julian took his arm, and with the sword of his enemy in his hand, led him three times round the field that all might see how he had surrendered.*

For this victory Julian Romero was overwhelmed with honors. Romero was brought from the field with great triumph and the French King gave him a gold chain worth more than 7,600 crowns. The Dauphin gave him a surcoat stamped with gold worth more than the King's chain. King Henry extended special favor to Romero upon his return to England giving him a life pension of 600 ducats a year (which was only paid for a few years). Mora was so belittled that he left France and went to Hungary.

With the peace concluded and Romero's duel fought, orders came from England that the troops were to be dismissed and the mercenary captains were to return to London. Gamboa concealed the latter part of this order from his men, had them march into Flemish territory and then abandoned them, leaving them to provide for themselves.

The mercenary captains returned to England and hung about the court in London all summer and autumn of 1546, quarreling, gaming, and swaggering. Julian Romero, less refined and more hot-headed than the rest, nearly got into serious trouble. By living beyond his means, Romero had to borrow money to such an extent that he dared not walk out in public. One of his creditors, a Milanese named Bautista Baron, managed to have him arrested for 200 ducats.

Enraged at being hauled off to jail, Romero managed to get the sergeant to take him to Colonel Gamboa's house in hopes that he would pay the money. As soon as he arrived at Gamboa's house he launched into loud complaints about serving heretics and swore he would take his pike and four ducats a month pay and serve elsewhere. Gamboa paid the money but Romero's loose talk about heretics was dangerous and nearly got all of them in trouble. The Privy Council investigated the matter. Gamboa begged the merchant, who was testifying before the council, to accuse Romero as much as he could so that his pay would be taken away. The merchant seeing the malice of Gamboa claimed he was not a mischief-maker and would not speak to Gamboa. Later as the merchant entered the hearing room, Gamboa called out so that everybody could hear, "Senor, I beseech you to favor Julian as



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much as you can, for good or evil to him depends upon what you say." The merchant claimed there was so much noise when he entered the Colonel's home that he did not hear everything. The Council decided to scold Romero and he was issued a warning to never say such things again.

Trouble broke out in Scotland again and the Spanish captains were ordered to raise a fresh force of Spanish men-at-arms. The Spanish captains felt that they could not raise a fresh force of Spanish men-at-arms on such a short notice. Gamboa managed to raise a regiment of Burgundians to take part in the siege at Haddington. While Gamboa wintered in the south, his men, led by ensign Perez, deserted *en masse* to the enemy. King Henry VIII died at the beginning of 1547 and by the time Somerset was ready to leave London, plenty of Spanish and Italian mercenaries had joined and were able to turn the victory to the English at the battle of Pinkie. Rumors claim that Romero was made an English knight after this battle, and although many Spaniards were knighted, Romero's name is not among them.

Romero remained in Scotland during the campaigns of 1548-9. Romero and Pero Negro managed to capture a French general in front of his troops at Broughty Ferry near Dundee and Romero was at the defeat of Kett's rebellion in the autumn of 1549.

In 1549 England was no longer a fit place for Spanish mercenaries. King Edward VI was dying and with the next heiress, Mary, being a papist and part Spanish, the Spanish mercenaries were no longer trusted to fight in favor of the Protestant cause so they were dismissed.

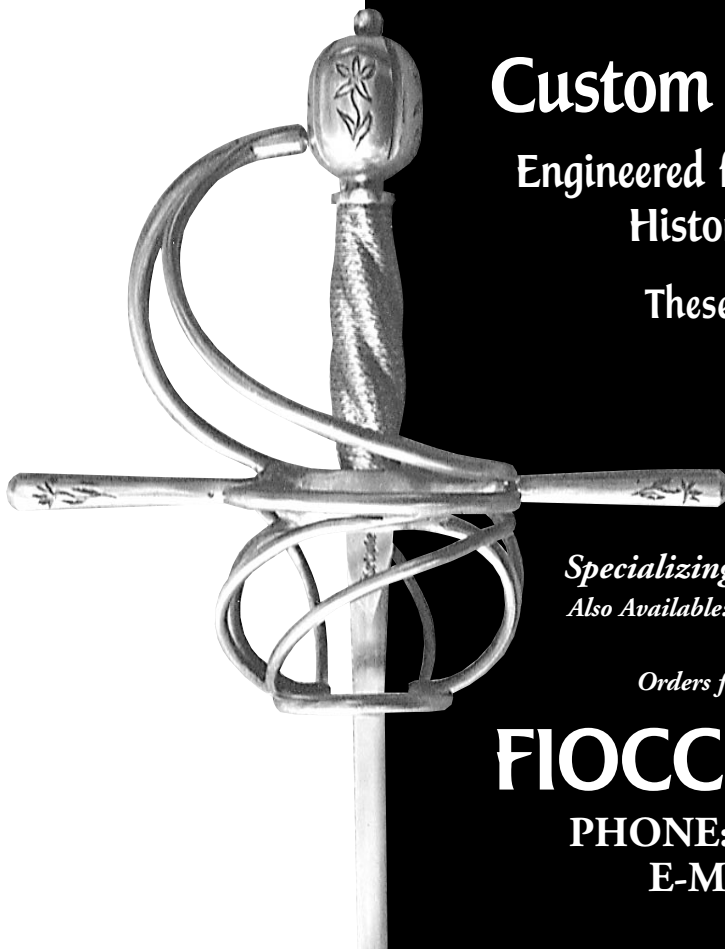
Two years after he left England, Romero was in France attracting notice for his bravery and dash at the battle of St.

Quintin where he is mentioned in the poem, *La Araucana*, as one of the most conspicuous heroes of the storming of the town.

Romero went to Milan and was involved in Philip II's war with the Turks being promoted to the rank of colonel in 1567. Romero was later sent to the Netherlands to serve under the Duke of Alba where he spent the rest of his life serving in the wars in the Netherlands. He was singled out as one of Alba's most unscrupulous officers who could be depended on in any emergency and who was fanatically loyal to his sovereign and the faith for which he was fighting. He received recognition for reaching the undefended side of a fort by fording an impassable river with his men up to their knees in water breaking the ice with each step. Romero's name was on everybody's lips as the coming avenger of Philip's grievances against the English queen and her ministers. Romero's ferocity in massacring the entire population of Naarden and Haarlem terrified the Dutch.

Romero tired of battle and wished to retire along with his commander, the Duke of Alba. He had married a woman from his province in 1565 and yearned to be with his family and away from the war. His repeated requests to King Philip went unanswered and he continued to serve in the Netherlands.

After losing seven hundred men and his ship with all his papers and instructions to the enemy, Romero was sick at heart. Philip had sent him no reward or even thanks for his staying after Alba had left. After the defeat at Bergen, Romero busied himself for some months in planning fortifications and reorganizing the forces. By the end of June he was done and affairs in South Flanders were looking more tranquil. In June he wrote the Viceroy requesting leave. He had served Philip for forty years without once resting from the wars and his duty. He had lost an arm, a leg, an eye and



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an ear and the rest of his body was so scarred with wounds that he suffered continually. His son had died, he had two daughters and his wife's finances were nearly gone. He offered to serve again if needed as long as his wife and home were nearby.

If he was allowed to return home it was short lived for in October of the next year he was commanding thirty standards of troops before Zerusee and endeavored to capture an island near Dortrecht. Later he was involved in the capture of Antwerp, the richest city in Christendom.

The Spanish had become more bloodthirsty than ever and when Don Juan of Austria finally arrived as Governor, the Spanish withdrew from Flanders and Romero went to Italy. In 1577 when the Spanish forces were recalled from Italy, Romero was designated for the chief command of an army of six thousand men who were to act subsequently under Alexander Farnese in Flanders. On his march from Cremona at the head of his force the war-worn old soldier, without a moment's warning, fell from his horse, dead. He breathed his last as he had lived, full-armed and harnessed for the fray, surrounded by the fierce soldiery he had led so often. Like the duel he fought in France, Julian Romero fought to the last sunset of his life.

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Motley, John Lothrop. *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*. George Allen and Unwin Ltd: London, 1889.

**FOOTNOTES**

<sup>1</sup> No ruler could hope to make war without mercenaries. Certain nationalities and groups were recognized as being quality material: The Turkish Janissaries; the Swiss; the German pikemen (Landsknechts) and mounted pistolers (Reiters); French light horse and Spanish infantry, the famous *tercios*. A *tercio* at full strength was an infantry unit of 3,000 men (all long-serving and Spanish) divided into 12 companies, armed with pikes, javelins and arquebuses. Like the Roman legions, *tercios* were permanently stationed abroad and were named after their place of garrison.

— Fin



The painting by El Greco created in 1588, eleven years after Romero's death, is entitled *Portrait of Julian Romero El De Las Azanas with His Patron Saint* and is housed in the Prado Museum in Madrid. The painting, which is 81 1/2 x 50 inches, is said to have been commissioned by Dona Maria Gaytan Romero for a sepulchral monument as a votive picture to be placed beside an altar toward which the dead man and his patron saint raise their eyes. Julian is pictured kneeling in the great white cape of the

Order of Santiago. The patron saint, St. Julian, is wearing armor and makes a protective gesture with one hand resting lightly on his protegee's shoulder and the other extending one finger which touches nothing as if moved by piety. El Greco has transformed the valiant soldier, the man of action, into a contemplator who has turned away from worldly things and aspires only to eternal peace.

— LCM

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# Feints and Responses to Them



A dagger parry blocks only air in the fatal aftermath of a successful feint in Francisco de Goya's *The Mortal Thrust*.

by Gerard Thibault d'Anvers

Translated by John Michael Greer

Our intention is to examine the advantages of the straight line, presented at the First Instance with judgement, and in the form which is shown in the first plan of the preceding diagram. On this all the following operations also depend. Seeing, though, that swordsmen most often begin with feints as soon as they come into measure, in order to put the opponent's sword a little out of line before they make their estocades, it seems necessary to us, for your greater satisfaction and in order to clarify the diagram, to put here a brief discourse on the subject of feints, before entering on the particular explanation of the examples which are offered here.

Let us suppose, then, that Alexander is in position first, his right foot on the outer side of quadrangle AC and the other on the foot line. Zachary has come to attack him and puts himself at the First Instance on the other end of the circle, in the same posture of the straight line, standing on the right side of the quadrangle and the ordinary line of the left foot, with his sword below the other. He proceeds to feint to the outside and the inside, now with the feet fixed in place, now and more often with the right foot raised a little; sometimes remaining at the First Instance, other times moving a little farther away or a little closer, according to his preference.

Altogether he makes so great a variety of feints that it is impossible for Alexander to counter them effectively, unless he distinguishes exactly the measure to which each of them approaches him. In the advancement of the foot and the body which accompanies them, four degrees can be distinguished. From these proceed four kinds of feints which must be recognized, in order to properly defend against them according to the following instructions. Without these there are no other remedies against subtle feints but simply to thrust and give one's body recklessly to the enemy, in the hope of trading him wound for wound, or to play the coward by always retreating out of measure, and thus alone to escape being hit.

The first kind of feint is that which is made by Zachary at the First Instance by raising his right foot and shifting his weight to the left foot, without any noticeable forward movement, so that his point

does not pass the guard of the opposing sword. The remedy for this feint is to despise it, and to make no movement at all against it, neither of the arm nor of the sword, until the enemy comes closer.

The second kind is when he begins by leaning his body forward, so that whether he feints to the outside or the inside, the point will be able to reach the enemy's wrist. The counter is, at the same time, to quicken the arm and the sword hand, to straighten the body, and to raise the toes of the left foot so that it will be able to move quickly as circumstances require, and in the same way to raise the point of the sword to the side of the feint, above the opposing sword, to cover it with a little superiority.

The third kind is when he continues advancing his body far enough that his point comes to the middle of the opponent's forearm. This cannot be done without a greater and more apparent movement than in the preceding case. The counter to this kind of feint is made nearly in the same way as the one just described, but augmented and accommodated to the demands made by the opponent's actions. Thus it is necessary, at the same time, to extend the body, raise the right foot, raise the arm and the sword to the front, while turning the outside of the wrist a little higher than the other, and raising the point so that it makes an obtuse angle with the opposing sword, in order to cover it with a little advantage of superiority.

Note also that this kind of feint is the farthest advance of the body which can or ought to be permitted to the opponent, while still remaining on the defensive. If he comes farther forward, he must be attacked at the same moment, whether he follows up his feint beginning on the inside or the outside of the arm, to wound the same side, or cuts under the blade to hit lower or to strike the other side. At the same time, the preparation we have just described will serve as a universal response which will render all these designs useless.

The fourth kind is when he advances so far with his feint that the point of his sword is able to reach the opponent's elbow, which is the furthest and greatest movement he is able to make without moving his feet. Alexander would recognize this extreme forward movement of his opponent by the great and noticeable advancement and leaning of the body which it requires. He ought to take good care not to allow this feint to be completed once begun, for to the second movement there will be no remedy. And it is necessary, in order to turn aside the assailant, that the defender should take a short step along the diameter, entering while the enemy is still making the feint, with body straight and arm and sword extended, so that his point hits the opponent's face before the feint is completed. But all this will be shown to you more amply in Chapter Twenty-Seven, which is the proper place to deal with feints, and with the assistance of the left hand.

This is the information which we have judged necessary to provide you concerning feints and their counter. This will be of very great utility to students who have already made some notable advancement, but may be passed over by novices, who will have to learn to govern their swords, hands, arms and legs well enough before they embark on observations as subtle as these. These latter should content themselves for the present with receiving this material solely as theory. They should practice the more basic examples in this chapter, which are without so many circumstances, so that they may simply learn the thrusts and counters which will be explained in the descriptions following, rather than trying to take up skillfully the different remedies for the different kinds of feints. For indeed one cannot fly without wings.

✦ — Fin

# The Bilbo and Spanish Swordsmanship

by John McGrath

Reprinted from *The Sword*

While most of Europe had adopted the neat and convenient smallsword by the mid 17th century, Spanish swordsmen continued to favor its predecessor, the rapier. They maintained their allegiance to this weapon until the sword was abandoned as an item of dress for gentlemen and, in the process, developed a version of the rapier known as the bilbo.

The large asymmetrical shell guards of a typical bilbo are fixed to the other components of the hilt by four screws, a common feature of such swords, and are folded towards the pommel to enclose the hand. The large arms of the hilt (*pas d'ane* rings) surround a stout *ricasso* and join together under the shells to form a decorative washer into which the screws fit. There are prominent *quillons* (in this case counter swept) and a knuckle guard which is not attached to the, characteristically, ellipsoidal pommel. The upper *quillon* curves sharply to become parallel with the blade, leaving a narrow gap in between. This is, presumably, a device for catching the opponent's sword blade either to break it or to effect a disarmament.

In the example pictured the wire handle binding is missing from the quatrefoil cross-sectional grip so typical of Spanish weapons. This weapon is mounted with a stout double-edged blade. The key dimen-

sions are: overall length 1054 mm (41 1/2 in), blade length 883 mm (34 3/4 in), blade width at shoulder 38mm (1 1/2 in), length of grip 83 mm (3 1/4 in).

Other specimens have straight *quillons* or a single curved *quillon* and may be fitted with lighter blades more suited to thrusting than to cutting. Many bilbos are plain fighting weapons, such as the one illustrated, but some have hilts with restrained decoration.

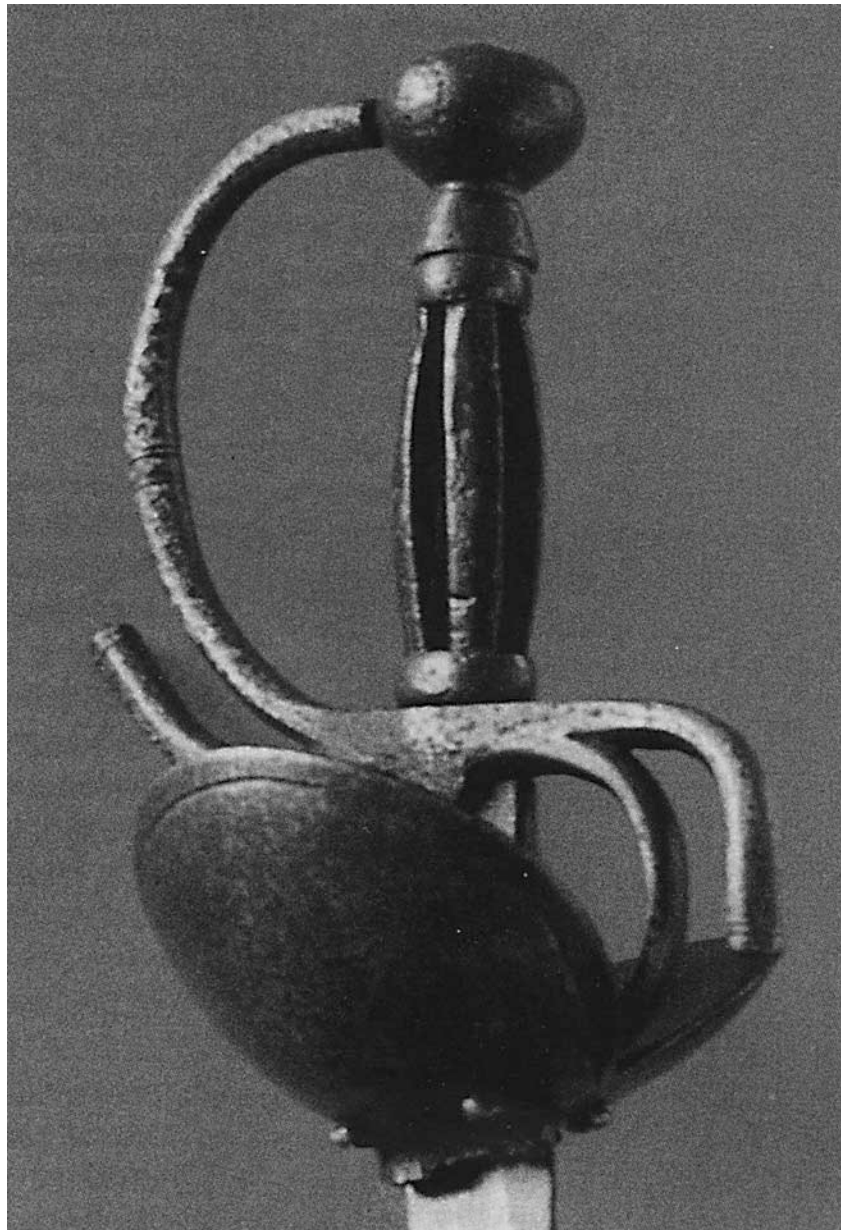
In general form, the bilbo is simpler than the Pappenheimer hilt, characteristic of the Low Countries at the time of the Thirty Years' War, which has additional

bars as well as the shell guard. In turn it is less minimalist than the cup-hilted rapier, often associated with Iberian areas of influence, where the shells have become fused into a single cup to protect the sword hand. Bilbos seem to have been overlooked by collectors and receive very scant attention in the reference books. Perhaps this is because the authors looked upon the bilbo as a degenerate survivor; a dinosaur of a rapier. It is quite possible to take the opposite view and to regard the bilbo as the most highly evolved form of the rapier with a design incorporating the results of all the many experiments of the previous

centuries. Certainly, some earlier styles were short-lived fashions and it is more logical to regard these as the true evolutionary failures of the rapier family, despite their allure for collectors. Most references suggest that bilbos are first encountered during the third quarter of the 17th century and finally died out in the first quarter of the 19th century. There is, however, a reference to a brass-hilted bilbo in Shakespeare's *The Merry Wives of Windsor*:

*Pistol: I combat challenging (sic) of this latten bilbo. (1.i.162)*

Whatever their precise time span, dating bilbos is very difficult because there were few stylistic developments. The only real exceptions are the military patterns, which emerged when uniformity of equipment was imposed by military authorities at the end of this period. This stability to design also supports the view that the bilbo is the most refined type of rapier capable of little, if any, further improvement.





Spanish swordsmen were as conservative about their style of fighting as they were about their weapons. George Silver, writing in his *Paradoxes of Defence*, 1599, has this to say about their method:

*This is the maner of Spanish fight, they stand as braive as they can with their bodies straightupright, narrow spaced, with their feet continually moving, as if they were in a dance, holding forth their armes and Rapiers verie straight against the face or bodies of their enemies: & this is the only lying to accomplish that kind of fight. And this note, that as long as any man shall lie that manner with his arme, and point of his Rapier straight, it shall be impossible for his adversaire to hurt him, because in that straight holding forth of his arme, which way soener a blow shall be made against him, by reason that his Rapier hilt lyeth so farre before him, he hath but a verie litle way to move, to make his ward perfect, in this maner. If a blow be made at the right side of the head, a very little moving of the hand with the knuckles upward defendeth that side of the head or bodie, and the point being still out straight, greatly endangereth the striker: and so likewise, if a blow be made at the left side o the head, a verie small turning of the wrist with the knuckles downward, defendeth that side of the head and bodies, and the point of the Rapier much indangereth the hand, arme, face or bodie of the striker: and if any thrusts be made, the wards, by reason of the indirections in moving the feet in maner of dancing as afore-said, maketh a perfect ward, and still withall the point greatly endagereth the other. And thus is the Spanish fight perfect: so long as you can keep that order, and soone learned and therefore to be accounted the best fight with the Rapier of all other. But note how this Spanish fight is perfect, and you shall see no longer than you can keepe your point straight against your adversaire...*

This style is illustrated clearly in Girard Thibault's *Académie de l'Espée*, published in 1628. Nearly two hundred years later nothing much had changed. An encyclopedia of 1806, right at the end of the period when swords were standard items of male dress, shows a Spanish swordsman with sword pointing directly at his opponent at the end of a straight raised arm.

Perhaps these observations could help those involved in the cognate discipline of fight direction when one or more of the combatants is Spanish. The employment of a bilbo would make a refreshing change from the cup-hilt or swept hilt rapier. It is a visually attractive form of sword and, as well as offering a good degree of protection to the hand, should be quite easily fabricated by a good armorer. Thibault shows the correct way to hold a rapier, with the forefinger round the arms of the hilt and the hand in pronation. The characteristic Spanish stance should be easier for an inexperienced fighter to master than a more conventional fencing position. Indeed Silver made just this point nearly 400 years ago in the extract quoted above. The physical fitness required to maintain the posture for more than a few minutes would not be relevant in a stage fight where, if this became a problem, some way of resting the fighter could easily be devised. This device was written into the text and stage directions of Elizabethan plays to give the actors who were using heavy swords and wearing heavy armour necessary rests in the action. The dance-like mobility described by Silver should also offer possibilities of movement and action different from that normally associated with rapier fencing.

✦ — *Fin*

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# Proximity: The Consequences of Conflict and Distance, Part II

## The Three Rings of Progression

by Payson Burt



The three rings of progression of distance are demonstrated by Michelle Ladd and Payson Burt. Photo by Ruth Howell.

These three rings represent **distance** and the changing dynamic that must accompany any transition from one to the other. The distance and the size of these rings are dictated by the type of fight. An unarmed fight is gauged by arm and leg length. In a sword fight, all three rings would be larger to reflect the extended reach.

When appropriate reactions are mentioned in these exercises, it is with the understanding that both participants are working within the basic parameters discussed in Part I of *The Fight Master*, 1999 Vol XXII Number 1 (trained fighters dealing straightforwardly with a situation and keeping their **governors** in balance) without adding anything else.

**1st Ring**—At this distance the two actors are within easy striking distance. A punch, kick or push could easily land with very little change in distance, perhaps leaning in of the body. This would be similar to the distance of two boxers while they exchange blows, or lunging distance while swordfighting. The *garde* is up and the actors are aware of, and respond *immediately* to, any movement their partner performs. The stakes and

danger are at their highest. **Time** here is very short. One cannot spend much time at this distance before something must happen. It is also very difficult to retreat from this circle without a character losing face.

**2nd Ring**—At this distance, one side must make a large move in order to strike the other, such as a *passee* forward into a lunge, or a crossover step to kick. There is more **time** here. The *garde* is more relaxed than in the first ring, but still is *connected*. Neither actor can afford to drop his *garde* completely, look or turn away. At this distance fatigue and injury may be invested, but very carefully.

This is where most of the the character *en garde* testing takes place or where a *guardia* is held. One may stay here longer than the first circle, but eventually something must happen.

**3rd Ring**—At this distance, neither actor can hit the other without taking a few steps inward. The *garde* can safely be more relaxed. This is the distance to drop the *garde* for a quick moment to catch a breath or invest in an injury. From this distance, looking away has much more latitude. The *garde* may be

broader and the movements bigger because a trained fighter would know what it would require, and how much **time** it would take for the opponent to traverse the given distance. This is not to say that they are not *en garde*. If the partner diminishes distance the response should be immediate, but there is simply more latitude in terms of the **governors** because the **time** it would take an opponent to traverse the distance will allow the person who is *en garde* the **time** to find their **proportion** before he is endangered.

Anything outside this third ring is completely out of distance, but still in a *sphere of influence*, and a trained fighter would know that this circumstance could change at any time and must be acknowledged. Outside the third circle would be a place for an actor to escape to during a fight in order to rest, invest in an injury, or have dialogue. The more **distance** away from the third circle, the more **time** the individual has, and the less **proportion** is needed to maintain an *en garde*.

This is the very crux of the matter and, although this last paragraph seems to

have stated the obvious, what one sees much too often on stage is two fighters separating and perhaps resting, going to one knee or some other position that is not *en garde* but too close to be credible. Sometimes actors are asked to take this kind of acting beat within the second circle—and sometimes in the first!

[Exercise 7]

[Review]

#### STRATEGY

*So soon as ever thou seest him, draw; and as thou drawst, swear horrible; for it comes to pass oft that a terrible oath, with a swaggering accent sharply twanged off, gives manhood more approbation than ever proof itself would have earned him*

Sir Toby—*Twelfth Night* 1601

This section will briefly discuss different choices for an actor when developing the *dialogue* of *en garde*. A trained fighter would understand and apply the concepts discussed earlier, and this might make for a very competent and balanced fight, but there are still many dynamic choices a fighter may bring to a fight that does not *unbalance* his **governors**. This could be seen as characterization, but one should consider these, for now, wise and informed dynamics, for these are ways to flavor an *en garde* yet not break the rules set up earlier. This will take into account wise and judicious philosophies and strategies of fighting.

#### AGENT AND PATIENT

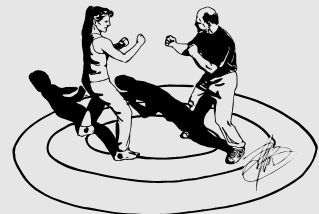
A well trained and intuitive fighter can be aggressive and/or defensive in nature. Another word for these dynamics would be, according to George Silver in his *Paradoxes of Defence*, **Agent** and **Patient**. These are very appropriate words for the spirit of approaching an *en garde* situation. An **agent** fighter will press for reactions from the other in order to set up an attack or gain information on his opponent. A **patient** fighter will wait for the other to commit to a movement or attack and react appropriately. Both types of fighters, if well trained, would keep all **governors** in balance, taking into consideration how close they are to the other (**distance**) and what information has been gathered while being *en garde*. Every move would have a **time** and **place**. In terms of story, it would show one fighter actively pressing for reactions while the other reacts appro-

## Exercise 7

### Exploring the Three Circles

I. In an unarmed situation, the actors begin exploring the circles. The actors establish an *en garde*, but do not launch into an attack. The two actors just keep the *en garde* in balance and experience the changes from one circle to the other. At this point, the actors do not make any choices in character or circumstance. Their reactions are grounded in the basic way explored earlier. This is a chance to balance the **governors** and explore wise and judicious decisions for the moment.

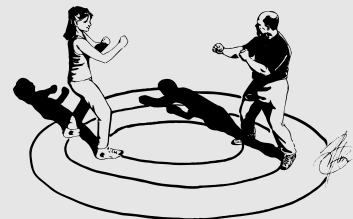
A. The actors explore the first circle. Their reactions to each other should be immediate and focused. They should feel the intensity. The actors will quickly feel that they must either commit forward into an attack or back away from this first circle. In other words, there is very little **time** in which to react to an attack. This also means that one might overreact (loss of **proportion**) to a false attack (feint<sup>1</sup>) and both actors' rhythms become very *brittle* with one, or both going out of control. Either way, it is not a comfortable **place** in which to be. One's **proportion** is very important here in terms of *keeping one's guard up*. While moving around the circle, the actors try to maintain the distance.



The first circle. Illustration by Trampas Thompson.

The actors take turns giving feints (improvisational offers) to each other in order to supply something with which to react. Only one side gives the stimuli at this point. In reacting to a feint, the actor maintains **proportion** or else an opening is created. If a feint is performed and the partner loses **proportion** does the other recognize it?

B. Next, one actor takes a large step backward and discovers the second ring and how it feels to live there. While moving either linearly or in a circle, the actor tries to keep the distance consistent.

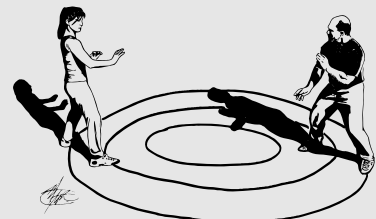


The second circle. Illustration by Trampas Thompson.

After having explored this distance, the actor stays *en garde* and slowly enters into the first ring and sees what happens. Going back and forth from the first to the second ring without attacking, the actor simply experiences the changes in *garde*.

C. The actor takes another step back from the second circle and discovers the third circle further exploring how things change while maintaining distance and circling.

a. Now the actor moves between the third and second circle, feeling the *en garde* relaxing when backing into the third circle. The actor explores the parameters of each partner's **proportion** and how they change.



The third circle. Illustration by Trampas Thompson.

b. The actor goes from the third circle into the second for a moment then continues to the first and notices the changes as distance closes.

c. As awareness of the rings, and the partner's reach develop, the actor concentrates on **time** and **proportion**. Now, all three circles are available to play within; giving a chance for each to react in very specific ways by balancing the **governors**.

II. For simplicity sake, divide the responsibilities and have X provide stimuli while Y reacts so that there is no danger of collisions and gross overbalance of **governors**. The participants should stay with that restriction for now. Going even farther and creating a very simple circumstance, Y reacts to distance while X aggressively changes distance. The participants should always keep in mind (especially X) that they are trying to keep their **governors** in balance. The participants should switch roles liberally.

<sup>1</sup> A *feint*, or *feint attack* is defined by The Society of American Fight Directors in their glossary of terms as: "Any attacking action deliberately intended not to land on a target. The aim is to draw a reaction or a parry."

## REVIEW

The actors should review the **governors** while *en garde* and what dynamics each is trying to create for the illusion: how does X go about looking for and/or creating openings in Y's defense and what Y is doing to stop any implied attack.

**Partner who is diminishing Distance. (X)**

**I.** X works **time** so he *gets the jump* on Y, and diminish distance before Y can react. He does this by finding a moment in Y's rhythm and balance (**time** and **proportion**) where he is committed to an action and cannot react immediately.

**II.** Working angles, X finds or creates the moment Y is out of **proportion** so he can unbalance X.

**III.** X Maintains his own **proportion** so he may have the **time** to take advantage of that split second Y does not. Also, so when X does rush in, he does not leave himself open.

**Partner who is reacting. (Y)**

**I.** Y reacts in the appropriate **time** to either stop the implied attack and/or change *garde* because of a new distance and/or angle.

**II.** When stepping, or changing his garde, Y stays in **proportion** in order to be both stable and mobile and never allows a moment where he is off balance.

**Questions:**

**Participants:** A. How long does one feel one can stay in the first circle before something must happen? Why is this?

B. How long can one stay in the second or third rings?

C. Without stopping the momentum of the *garde*—where can one best express oneself?

**Observers:** A. Can one tell when false or inappropriate responses to stimuli are performed? How would one describe what one sees?

B. Are the participants being completely neutral during the exercise (simply keeping their **governors** in balance), or are character choices starting to creep in? What defines a character choice in this circumstance?



*Diminishing distance.* Photo by Ruth Howell.

## Exercise 8

### 'Be thine own Agent and Patient'

Going back to the earlier exercises of balancing the **governors** in relation to *the three rings of progression*, the actors now explore being **agent** or **patient**. The actors take turns being either fully **agent** or fully **patient**.

Eventually, any good fighter will be both **agent** and **patient** at any given moment. These dynamics would switch instantaneously back and forth, first **agent** pressing for reactions or openings and then **patient** lying in wait for a misjudgment, leaving his opponent wondering what will be happening next. The very nature of a *feint* attack is to be, at one instant, **agent** as one indicates an attack, then **patient** as the partner either reacts to the offered move or does not. If the offer is taken and the partner *takes the bait*, and momentarily loses **proportion**, then that fighter reacts appropriately and continues into an attack that takes advantage of that loss of **proportion**.

After liberal switching back and forth, the actors try being both **agent** and **patient** together.

priately waiting for a mistake to happen. Of course, in a perfectly balanced fight, this could go on forever.

A basic philosophy found throughout the martial arts and fencing is "when you attack, whether it is real attack or a false attack (a feint), you are at your most vulnerable." The **agent** fighter by the very nature of pressing for reactions leaves himself open. He is taking chances in order to gain important information about his opponent. This strategy may begin small, and if the

partner does not notice, react or take the bait, the attacks and/or openings may become bigger and bigger until they become an **invitation**.

### INVITATIONS

An **invitation** is basically what it sounds like. The fighter is *inviting* the other to attack him. This may be done in a variety of ways, but they all involve creating a moment when he himself is vulnerable. The hope is that his opponent will commit to an action so that he may *spring a trap* on



*An invitation to attack.* Photo by Ruth Howell.

him. This may be done quickly in the midst of a number of moves, or singularly bringing focus to it.

An **agent** fighter should not confuse the **invitation** with more extreme character choices like cockiness or untrained arrogance. It is a specific tactic done for specific reasons. A **patient** fighter might also make **invitations**, but this would be done with much more subtlety, albeit for the same strategic reasons. An **invitation**, therefore, is a valuable tool in specifying or justifying how and why a first attack is made.

[Exercise 8]

#### ADDING CHARACTER CHOICES

So far, this article has examined and specified how a well-trained fighter might be proportioned while establishing parameters on how one would react to stimuli. A system has been articulated to gauge the actor's balance, proportion and timing for the purpose of cleanly showing a simplified neutral character: a martial artist in action regardless of time or culture. This is only the first step in terms of an actor's job: to present a specific character in a

### Exercise 9

#### Break the Rules

The actors make some assumptions about two characters working the three rings. One character is trained and courageous, the other is frightened and untrained. Some of the choices that might convey to an audience whether a character does not know what one is doing or is afraid are as follows:

- Raising of the **garde** early or late
- Lost or no **proportion**
- Over expenditure of energy at inappropriate times
- Overreaction to feints resulting in loss of **proportion**
- Loss or no sense of **time**—startled reactions or rhythms that have no basis in the situation

The actors explore these and other inappropriate reactions keeping in mind the seriousness of the circumstance in order to stay out of the realm of comedy, which is a danger here. The actors will discover other inappropriate responses that can be created. Each time will be different depending on what the partner, who is portraying all the balance that has been worked on so far, gives in terms of an offer.

specific circumstance. The actor must be able to choose to show an untrained fighter or one that is frightened. How can one know, if the character is more afraid or less trained, or, when a character is raising his *garde* too early given the circumstance? If one does not know when it is appropriate for a knowledgeable fighter to do so, how can one knowledgeably violate that rule?

Any system exists in order to allow participants to know when they are *breaking* the rules of that system. Therefore, now that some basic rules have been established, the next exercises will explore how one may break the rules for specific reasons. This will be done with choices based on character and circumstance.

[Exercise 9]

### Exercise 10

#### Create a Scene

I. Starting with a very simple scene, X enters into a space outside of the third ring from Y. X does a circling section, then approaches into a closer distance leading to a single punch that Y avoids.

The actors should decide the following:

- A. Where is the audience?
- B. Where will the scene start? Where will both participants enter into the choreography (usually when working from choreography, the first moment will be very specific in terms of placement and angle on the stage)?
- C. Are the characters trained as fighters or untrained? For now, the easier and cleaner choice is to begin with both X and Y competently balancing their **governors**.

II. The actors should work out a specific opening move for the choreography. It should be made easy such as a punch with a lot of latitude for error. The best response would be that the punch is avoided. The actors rehearse only the punch and make sure there is a small cue to let Y know when X is coming. Y's avoidance is rehearsed and made consistent.

III. Now that the beginning and end of the scene has been defined, all that is left to explore is the time between the opening moment and the explosion into the first (and only) move of the choreography. This is the time for improvisation using the techniques discussed earlier to inform all moment to moment decisions.

A. The actors try playing with the circles and really build up the stakes. Eventually one works his way into the first circle and slowly and clearly goes into the pre-choreographed opening move. The actors try it a few times and agree on some general choices about the pattern of the closure. As comfort and consistency build and the cue to punch is well established, the actors start to explore the **time** of the punch and explode (figuratively speaking) into it. The actors shape the piece so that there is a clear escalation into the final explosion, making sure the moment happens in the first circle.

IV. The actors continue to refine and make more specific the moments that are discovered while improvising from the opening of the scene to the punch, remaining true to the distance of the moment and all the attached dynamics. The actors practice so that the punch eventually does explode out of the moment and first circle.

- A. What are the cues one is giving one's partner?
- B. Is the punch getting through the partner's defenses or is one attacking a closed line? The actors needs to justify how the punch gets in without diminishing the other character.

C. The actors should be careful not to restrict the choices linearly. In other words, if one actor enters into the first circle, he always has the option to back out of it! This can add dimension to the story that is being created.

V. The actors repeat the same scene as rehearsed, but once in the first circle, they stay there a little too long.

- A. How does this feel?
- B. How does this look to the people watching?
- C. At what point does it become false?

VI. The actors do the same scene, but instead of working into the first circle, they do the punch from slightly farther away. Playing with this for awhile, the actors work toward doing the punch from the second circle and discover how this is different from punching from the first circle?

## Exercise 11

### Going back to the Beginning

Now that there is a basic understanding of the concepts of the *sphere of influence*, the **governors**, the three rings, and how to portray a person who is either trained or not trained in a martial



Establishing *En Garde*. Photo by Ruth Howell.

spirit, the actors go back to the situation at the beginning of Part I. Two characters have reached the point where they are going to approach each other with intent to do harm but, in the given circumstances, there is no fight.

I. The actors play the moment of closure, and walk in nose to nose. This is the first ring at its best and here anything could happen, but the parameters of the scene are to withdraw. How can this be done when so close to one's partner? It is easy if one *submits* to the other, but harder if both want to maintain their integrity. How can both decide to withdraw from the situation without losing face?

II. Continue playing using all three rings and discover how distance can inform the circumstance and dynamics of this situation. The actors will find out how much time each circle demands in order to reach a resolution. They will also discover what can be used in terms of the **governors; time and proportion** defined by one's distance that empower or weaken one in that space.

What the actors will further discover is that the **governors** are useful here as well. As one character stands within another character's space, **time and proportion** can be used (or not used) to advantage. Being true to the **distance** of the moment will inform the other **governors** resulting in truthful reactions.

## PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Improvisation and stage combat are usually mutually exclusive. It is taught that the last thing to do in a fight is *to be inspired*, doing something outside of what has been already rehearsed. But improvisation can have a place in these exercises if it is acknowledged there is an organic response that an *en garde* requires to be truly space effective. In the exercises so far, X and Y have already been improvising with each other. Improvisation is listening to a partner, not negating any offer that is given and continuing, or adding to, the scene. So, with specific parameters in terms of attack, improvisation can be a valuable tool in discovering the moments of a fight before and leading up to the moment of the first choreographed attack.

The challenge is

1. Discovering how long the scene should last.

2. How to safely explore and develop consistency through specific choices.

3. Understanding when and how to enter into the choreography.

[Exercise 10]

What has been developed is a process in which to explore organically all the important moments before the first attack. Whether the character is trained and balanced or untrained and unbalanced, this exercise will help the actor discover the choices available and create a scene safely and effectively.

[Exercise 11]

A good example of space, and its power is to look at a king, queen or most effectively, a dictator, whom everyone fears. The space that these people control is both defined and powerful and anyone who enters into that space, shows a clear sign of submission and respect. The Queen of England sitting on her throne clearly has control of her space, but when she is alone and intimate with a lover, or family member, her life and the way she relates to space are completely different. If playing a servant on stage, the spatial relationship between the master versus another servant is different. If playing the master, the actor can fill the space and control the servants merely by one's presence.

With these exercises, a structure has been defined to help develop the *muscles of proximity*, and explore other aspects of character. This work will allow the actor, inexperienced in actual conflict or martial training, to have more useful and appropriate choices. Conversely, the actor trained in the tactical arts, where intentions are hidden, might discover what the audience and other actors must see in order to tell an interesting story. This is only a beginning, and this study could go on for many more pages but for now, the actor should place this new awareness in all applications. It is hoped that the actor will find as much joy in specificity as the author has in using this technique.

✦ — Fin



Exploring the first circle, Bruce McKenzie (left) as Hamlet and Kevin Blake as Laertes use distance with characterization in Actors Theatre of Louisville's Hamlet. Fight direction by Drew Fracher, photo by Richard C. Trigg.

One does not often see fight directors taking any notice of armor. Whether the actors are armored or not, the fight movements and the effects of weapons do not seem to be different.

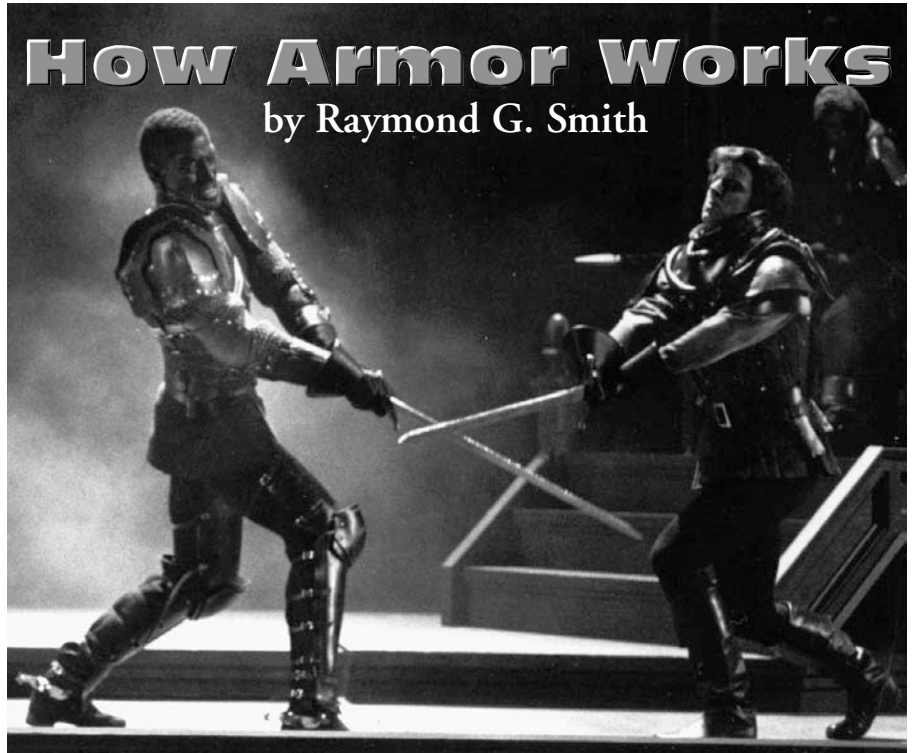
Armor works, otherwise, it would not have been used for so long. It could be a burden but was more often a savior. Armor was not as heavy as one might think. Surviving mailshirts weigh about twenty pounds and full plate suits of armor from the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries weigh from forty to fifty pounds. An armored man could get up after being knocked down and could mount his horse without difficulty. Mail and plate was rarely pierced by cuts and thrusts, although chroniclers of battles, tournaments and judicial combats do report such happenings.

Men in plate armor were not often killed while standing and fighting. More often the victim was knocked down and killed while on the ground. (This was also a favorable moment for the victim to surrender!) One reason fewer were killed while standing and fighting is that the body of a standing man has a lot of give; when on the ground the body has less give allowing the attacker to bash in the armor or drive a dagger into the joint of the armor. Part of the effect of a blow comes from the degree of resistance to the stroke.

A lesson would be that a man fighting in armor would probably stand up to a number of rather strong blows before they had much effect. He might be staggered, as a boxer taking a good punch, but he would still be able to fight. By contrast, if a hard blow lands on an unarmored part of the body, such as the arm or leg, that unarmored part might give way and the fight be lost.

A one-hand thrust with a stiff sword would be more likely to harm a man in complete plate armor than would a one-hand cutting blow. Northern European knights seem to have favored two-handed crushing weapons while Italian knights of the fifteenth century are more often shown with thrusting swords with very spiky points.

Descriptions of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries battles exist which tell of armor successfully resisting bul-



*Well articulated armor allows Warwick (Derek Weeden) to battle his opponent (Remi Sandri) in Oregon Shakespeare Festival's 1992 Henry VI. Fight direction by Christopher Villa, photo by Christopher Briscoe.*

lets from pistol or arquebus. The pistol was invented around 1520 and became common by the 1540s; musket proof armor was described, bought and used in the late sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, but was relatively heavy, a half or three-quarter suit weighting over sixty pounds. This use of half or three-quarter suits gave the swordsman a better chance to wound his opponent than did the full suits, and they must have tried to develop good point-accuracy, something like a modern epee fencer.

Armor declined after the Thirty Years' War but continued with cuirassed cavalry and pikemen to the end of the 17th century in Western Europe and longer in Poland and the Orient. This would take armor then into the period of the small-swords. Battle illustrations of the late seventeenth century of armored French cavalry show swords that appear to be small-swords. Perhaps these are artists' conceptions.

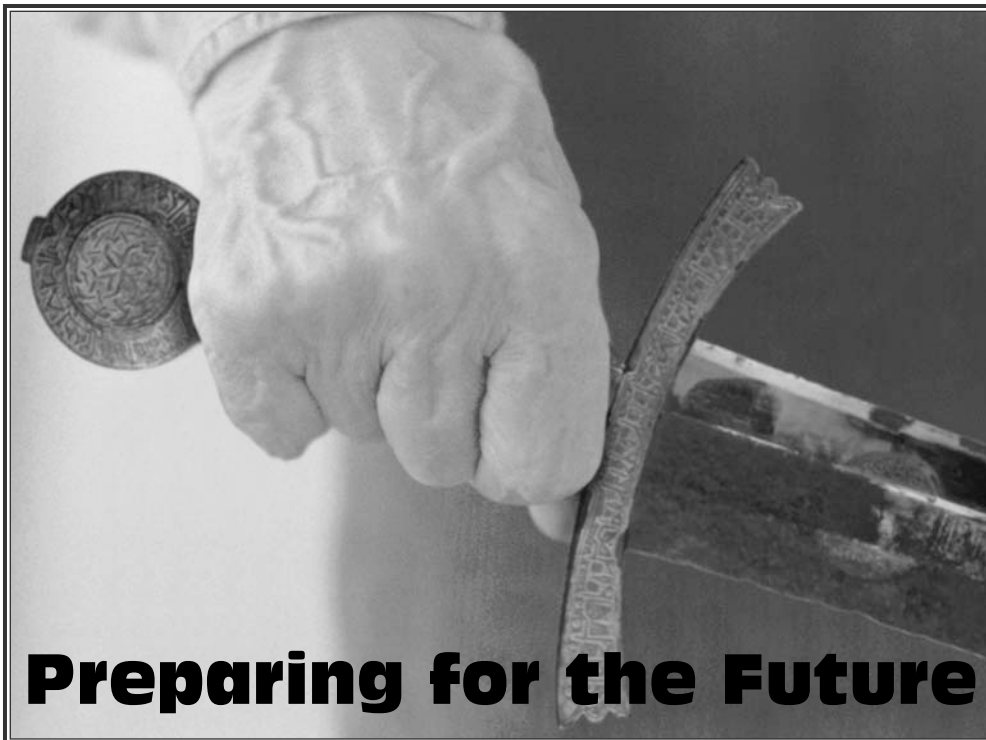
One often sees Shakespeare's plays done in various periods with the skill and knowledge of the sword and polearm of the period. One seldom sees armor used according to the Bard's own period. Perhaps this is an area in which improvements may be made.

The wearing of a breastplate in Shakespeare's time might have prompted the fighter to face his adversary more squarely. Rapier masters who carried the right shoulder a little advanced, would find that by facing the opponent more squarely a thrust from the enemy would only wound the shoulder, rather than go through the shoulder muscle into the chest. One remembers that such a thing had happened to Athos before his fight with d'Artagnan.

One is reminded also of the painter Caravaggio. When he killed his opponent Ranuccio Thomassoni with his rapier, the two thrusts went into Thomassoni's leg and groin. This suggests that Caravaggio knew or suspected that his enemy was armored under his clothing, and that the painter doubted his thrust would be effective through armor. As a reminder, rapier masters show few primary attacks to the legs; Henri de Saint-Didier in his *Traicté sur l'espée seule* shows two, but they are defeated respectively by a stop-thrust and a stop-cut. There are a number of instances during the Middle Ages of thrusts from medieval swords going through plate-armor, but no instances wherein a rapier thrust pierced plate.

— Fin





## Preparing for the Future

by Neil H. Fishman, CPA

**O**ne of the most important things a fight director, teacher or actor/combatant has to do today is plan for tomorrow. The day will eventually come when the sword arm is no longer able to provide a living, and that event is what one must prepare for. When Social Security was created back during the Depression, it was intended to provide for those who had no finances to support themselves when they could no longer work. Over the years, people came to rely solely on Social Security as the means of supporting their retirement. With people living longer, and the population getting older as a whole, there are fewer people paying into Social Security to support those collecting. In addition, with the surpluses currently in Social Security being used to help reduce budget deficits, there is the concern that Social Security will be bankrupt within the next fifty years, if not sooner. Therefore, it is incumbent upon the individual to take a more active role in preparing for retirement.

What can be done? Here are a few things that one can do:

First of all, a great many performers are also gainfully employed in other occupations. An employee should take advantage of a retirement plan offered by his employer, such as a 401K, and enroll in it. Whatever money is put away in such a plan is tax-deferred until withdrawn upon retirement.

If one is living from job to job, doing work as an office temp, waitressing, bartending, the 401K is probably not available. But there are some things that can be done. One can open an Individual Retirement Account (IRA). There are two types of IRAs: Traditional and Roth. The maximum amount that can be put into any IRA account(s) is \$2,000 per person per year, or the total earned income for the year, whichever is less. This amount may be put into an IRA account, or broken up among two or more. Money placed in a Traditional IRA is tax-deferred until one starts to withdraw funds which cannot be done until age 59 1/2. With the Roth IRA, tax is paid on the contribution now, but when withdrawn (also not before 59 1/2), the funds are 100 percent tax free. Which is the better way to go? Each individual has to decide whether to pay the tax now, or later.

For those who are self-employed and have an incorporated business, one has the option of creating a Savings Incentive Match Plan for Employees, called a SIMPLE-IRA. This is a retirement plan in which as much as \$6,000 may be contributed a year. However, if the self-employed individual has employees working for him, the employees must be allowed to participate if they meet certain requirements as prescribed by law. These require-

ments include two years of service during which they earned at least \$5,000 per year, and expect to earn as much in years that they participate in the plan. In addition, the business will contribute to the plan the equivalent of 3% of each participating employees' compensation for the year.

If one is self-employed and filing a Schedule C for unincorporated business on the 1040, one can create a Simplified Employee Pension (SEP). The amount that can be contributed to this is based on the individual's net income.

Lastly, if the individual does not want to do any of these, he can just pay himself. An individual may set aside a portion of every paycheck and put it somewhere and just not touch it. But one must make sure to put something into it every time he is paid.

(Even if doing any of the above, one should do this as well.)

With all of these options laid out, what does one do with the money? With a retirement plan at a place of employment, the employee should consult with the employer's personnel department as to what options they provide for what is invested. The options, as well as for any other type of retirement plan, can be any of the following: money market accounts, certificates of deposit, municipal bonds, corporate bonds, stocks, mutual funds, and government-backed securities. How the employee invests his money is up to the individual, but one should remember that any investment that offers a higher rate of return also has a high risk of the investment as well. The earlier the individual starts to invest, the more he may have in the future.

When one decides to start to invest, he should consult with a CPA as to which of these options are available. A CPA can also advise the individual as to the types of investments he might make. For making specific investments, one should have his CPA refer him to investment counselors or brokers. When deciding where to make investments, an individual should take into consideration how long he will be investing for, which is a factor in determining how much risk one should take.

— Fin

# TO THE POINT



*To the death (twice nightly).* Knights at Medieval Times performing in one of two daily tournaments. Photo courtesy Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament.

by J.T. Marlowe

*The Fight Master* met with Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament's amazing show director Greg Hopla. Greg oversees the high energy 'fights by the knights' in this unique cross between entertainment and a sporting event. Greg is also a leading performer in the show. *The Fight Master* and Greg talked near the stables where riders and Andalusian stallions prepare for another battle—'twice nightly!'

## PREPARING FOR KNIGHTHOOD

Working for Medieval Times for over twelve years, Greg has been fortunate to train on the job. His previous experience included a long stint at a Renaissance Faire where he moved from building arenas to cutting his teeth on fight choreography and horsemanship. His equestrian experience proved to be a natural fit for the high octane tournament at Medieval Times that features a reenactment of an 11th Century Spanish tale in which several knights fight each other 'to the death.' As Greg says when he saw the possibilities: "That's what I want to do!"

## COMMANDING THE KNIGHTS

As show director, Greg and his knights rehearse and practice before each performance as a warm-up. Greg still performs in the show because it gives him a first-hand look and up-close encounter with what's happening in the fight arena. In this way, the fight choreography is solidified and leaves little open to the kind of improvisational combat that would be risky and injurious to the participants.

## PERFORMING BEYOND THE CALL

As a performer, Greg skillfully swings the bola (spiked ball attached to handle by a chain) as he wraps it around another knight's sword to disarm him. Other theatrical moves include a backward fall off a horse at full speed and shield-to-shield combat. Other staged

fights use maces and the *alabarda* which is a cross between a battleaxe and spear. A point on the back of the weapon can be used by a combatant if he 'misses' on the forward stroke. He can stab with a backward thrust. Greg also performed and assisted the stunt coordinators when Hollywood came calling with Jim Carrey as *The Cable Guy*.

## A BREED APART

Greg trains both the riders and horses. Medieval Times maintains its own breeding stables in Texas. Utilizing the strengths of the Andalusian breed, their athleticism, responsive and cooperative nature, intelligence and kind temperament, Greg executes remarkable moves through the art of dressage. The horse is manipulated through a series of complex maneuvers by slight movements of the hands, legs, and weight. In one startling move, Greg, standing by the horse with his training whip, maneuvers the horse (weighing about 1000 pounds) into jumping into the air with all hooves off the ground! Even when the horse does an unpredictable move, the rider is trained to execute the appropriate response so that the audience thinks it is part of the show. During several fight sequences, horses are right up against one another as intense sword fighting breaks out. One knight pushes his blade against another's blade until that knight lies almost flat against the horse. The control between rider and horse is awesome!

## ON THE CUTTING EDGE

Greg has also contributed to the franchise (Medieval Times has six other 'castles' around the country and in Canada) by redesigning the weaponry. Previously, the knights used steel swords that split easily between the hilt and blade and also sent flecks of steel dangerously close to the combatants' faces. Greg reconfigured the weapons into a single piece design and now uses titanium from which to fashion all the weapons. Another advantage of titanium, besides being more lightweight, is its cool white sparking property when sword hits sword. It makes for a highly theatrical moment.

Other safety features include the use of sand in the arena for both participant



An Andalusion performs a capriole. Photo courtesy Medieval Times Dinner and Tournament.

and horse. With the rigor of the weekly shows, the sand makes it easier for the horses' backs and the backsides of the knights. During the jousting tournament, the lance tips, made of balsa wood, easily and safely break apart. The bell of the lance is made of fiberglass. Its light weight

If one wants to carouse with one's buddies and a few hundred other spectators, cheer a favorite knight to victory, and eat meat—then Medieval Times Dinner & Tournament is the place to be. Located in Buena Park, California, the diner is transported back in time to 11th Century Spain when men had to defend their king and woo their lady. One will see falcon and falconer perform before the crowd, and be amazed at the parade of Andalusian stallions. As the audience sits in air-conditioned comfort eating chicken and ribs, the knights perform skillfully in the jousting and tournament of games. The highlight of the show is the intense fight *to the death* as each knight hopes to be the last one standing. The audience sees remarkable feats by rider and horse. Afterwards, one may want to visit the Museum of Torture featuring a historical collection of instruments of ridicule and torture used during the Middle Ages. Authentic reproductions of Medieval swords from Spain and full armor can be purchased. On the way out, it might be wise to say hello to show director and knight extraordinaire Greg Hopla. Medieval Times' website is [www.medievaltimes.com](http://www.medievaltimes.com).

helps to balance the weapon when the knights toss them back and forth as they gallop across the arena. The knights must maintain intense concentration amidst the cheers of an audience of hundreds and flashing theatrical lighting. Despite the performers' training and these precautions, the knights suffer occasional injuries due to the nature of this extremely athletic event.

And yet, Medieval Times is never lacking for apprentices. Upon touring the backstage area, Greg points to the squires who aspire to perform as knights. They assist the knights and do a variety of jobs for the show. Getting into character, with a twinkle in his eye, Greg boasts that: "Not me, I was never a squire." And so another courageous knight rides into the arena to defend his honor and bravely confront his destiny. Hats off, or should it be our helmets off, to Greg and the rollicking good Medieval Times!

Special thanks to David Manuel, Public Relations Manager, for the grand tour.

✦ Fin

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Going for the ear, Ida Ferrier (Kim Wimmer) attacks Felix Harel (Wynn Harmon) in Indiana Repertory's *Les Trois Dumas*. Nick Sandys, Fight Director; photo by Greg Whitaker.

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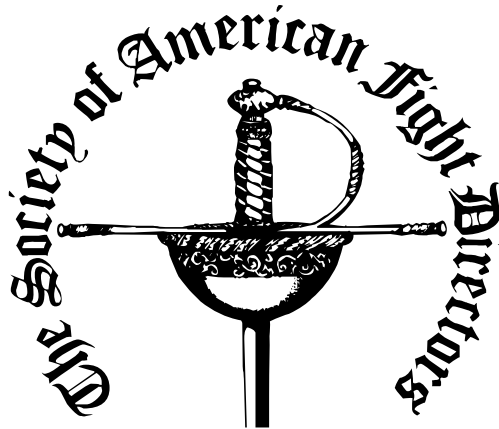
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**Dueling outdoors,** Sir Francis Drake (Richard Clark) has a bout with Don Alonzo (Scott Nice) at the New Jersey Renaissance Festival. Fight Direction by Ian Rose, photo by Clifford Herbst.

