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Fight Master Magazine

The Society of American Fight Directors

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Summer 2008

## **The Fight Master, Spring/Summer 2008, Vol. 31 Issue 1**

The Society of American Fight Directors

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The

# FIGHT MASTER

www.safd.org  
Spring/Summer 2008

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

Fighting and Flying

Stage Combat: A Means of Helping Others

The Body Language of Aggression:  
Training the Combatant Actor

To The Point  
In Your Face: The Celtic Leaf Sword

Combat As Actor Training  
Parts 1 & 2

Le Theatre Du Grand-Guignol De Paris:  
Theatre of Terror, Shrieks and  
Horripilation

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# THE 2008 NATIONAL STAGE COMBAT WORKSHOP *WEST*

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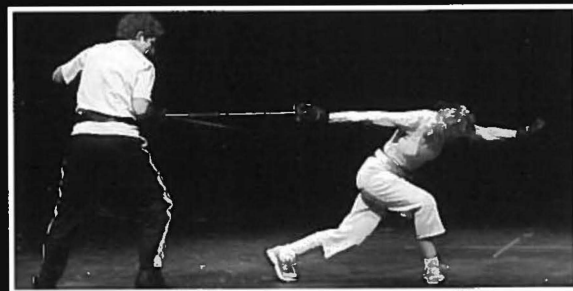
The Society of American Fight Directors and The University of Nevada-Las Vegas

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### Intermediate Actor/Combatant Workshop (IACW)

Take the next step. This workshop is designed for performers who wish to build on their existing knowledge. Students will strengthen their skills by focusing on performance and execution of technique, receive introductory training in weapon styles not offered at the beginner level. Students will be offered renewal testing and the opportunity to take additional Skills Proficiency Tests towards advanced actor/combatant status.

IACW Cost: \$1850 - Full tuition, \$1757.50 - AEA/SAG/AFTRA members, \$1665 - SAFD members, Room & Board is TBA



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For more information: [www.safd.org/events.asp](http://www.safd.org/events.asp)

# THE 2008 NATIONAL STAGE COMBAT WORKSHOP *EAST*

presented by

The Society of American Fight Directors and North Carolina School of the Arts

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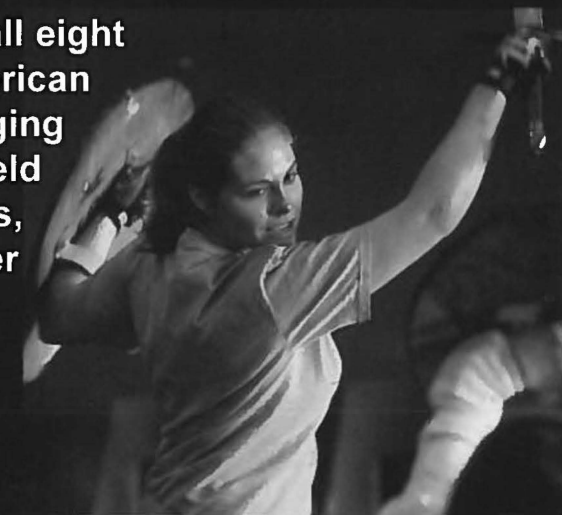
### Introduction to Stage Combat (ISC)

Immerse yourself in introductory courses in all eight disciplines recognized by the Society of American Fight Directors. Explore stage violence ranging from unarmed combat to sword and shield battles! Enrollment is open to professionals, college and high school students who are over 15 and have completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

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\$1500 - Full tuition  
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# THE 2008 ACTION FILM WORKSHOP

• DIRECTORS • FIGHT ARRANGERS • ACTORS • EDITORS •

**August 2 – 16, 2008**  
North Carolina School of the Arts  
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The AFW is an Action Film Boot Camp that offers hands-on instruction and practical experience in action filmmaking, with a focus on fight arranging, stunt-player/acting, cinematography and postproduction.

Students receive training from working professionals through a variety of camera studio exercises and on-location production work. Each exercise demonstrates another component in the craft of action film work. Last year's students completed 5 short films in 10 days!

Our student/teacher ratio of 3 to 1 means you'll never be turned loose to work it out alone. Teaching professionals monitor all exercises and film production.

Each workshop produces a variety of short films and action sequences that are screened at a local theatre as an Action Film Festival. The screenings are open to the public. All students receive a professionally produced DVD of their work.

"Our mission is not only to train you but to make you look good in the process!"

*Who Attends the Workshops?*

The AFW attracts participants from around the globe including students, post grads and working professionals who want to broaden their skills in action filmmaking. SAFD and BASSC actors and fight directors, college teachers, theater & TV directors, stunt-players, screenwriters, cinematographers, film & TV editors are all included in past workshop alumnae.

## Prices and Information:

- **Deadline to apply: June 1, 2008** •
- **Application fee: \$250 (due with application)** •

**Fight Arrangers** - \$1,950 + \$450 housing = \$2,400  
(\$950 deposit due 6/1) (Balance \$1,450 due 7/1/08)

**Actors/Stunt Players** - \$1,450 + \$450 housing = \$1,900  
(\$700 deposit due 6/1) (Balance \$1,200 due 7/1/08)

**DP's and Editors** - \$1,250 + \$450 housing = \$1,700  
(\$600 deposit due 6/1) (Balance \$1,100 due 7/1/08)

*Housing: Students are housed in campus apartments. Housing is double occupancy, gender specific, air-conditioned, two bedroom, two bathroom, laundry & full kitchen. Apartments are furnished (with linen, and kitchen supplies).*

*Discounts: Current SAFD, or BASSC members in good standing receive a 10% discount on tuition (not housing).*

The AFW also offers 3 day Weekend Warrior Workshops.  
Check the site for dates and locations.

**WWW.ACTIONFILMWORKSHOPS.COM**

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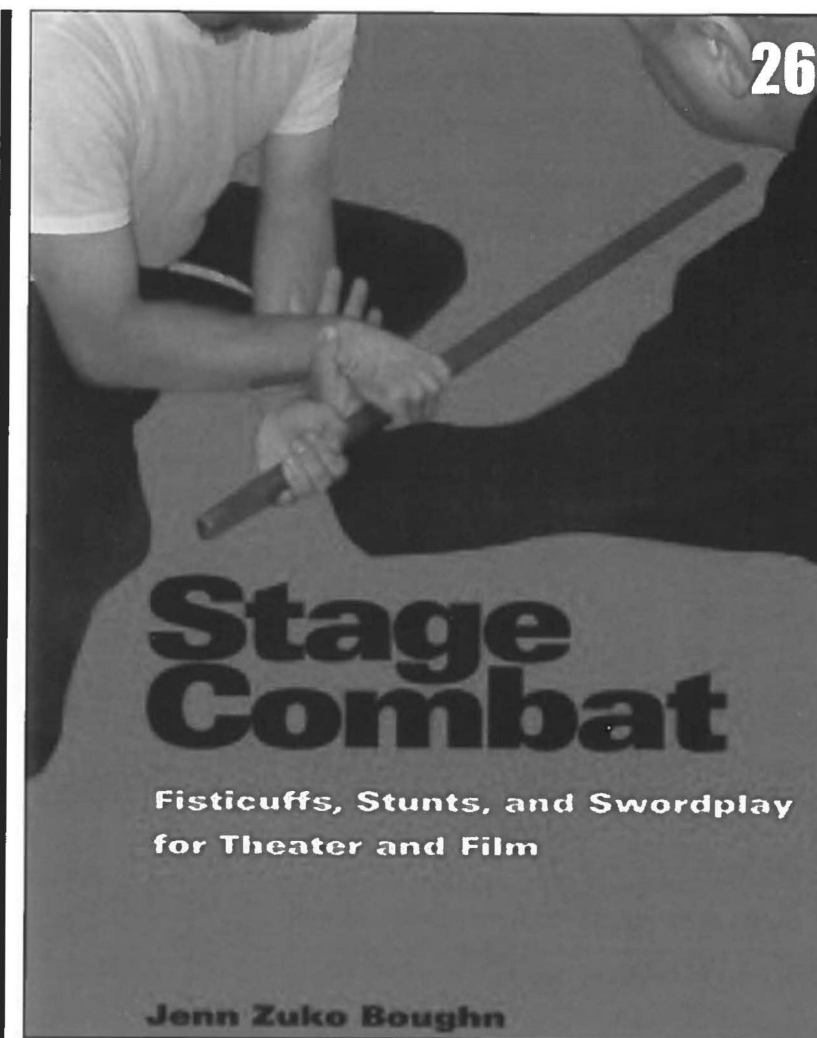
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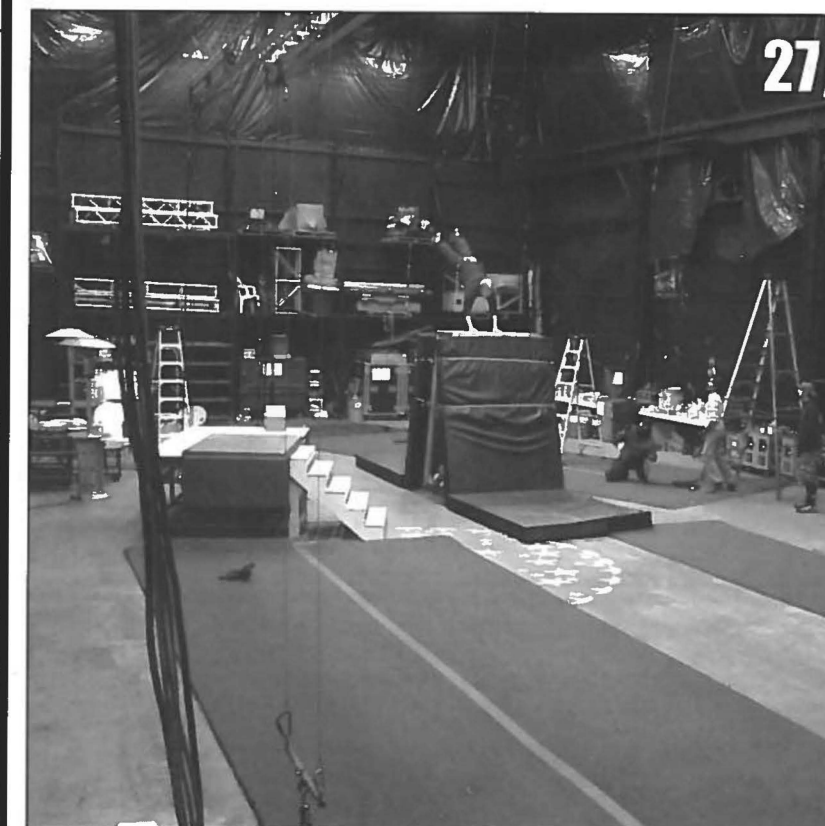
**Fighting and Flying**



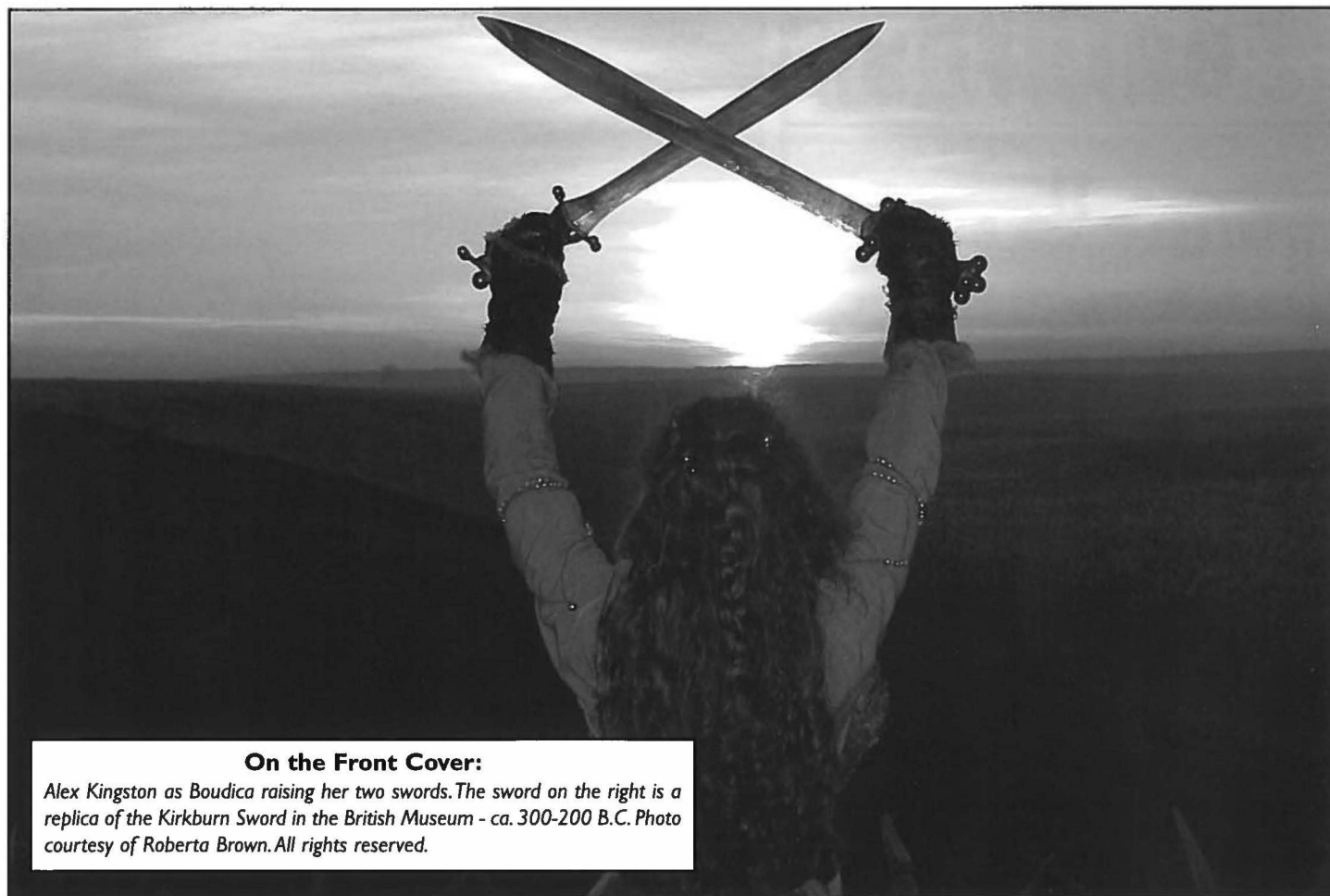
## Stage Combat

Fisticuffs, Stunts, and Swordplay  
for Theater and Film

Jenn Zuko Boughn







**On the Front Cover:**

Alex Kingston as Boudica raising her two swords. The sword on the right is a replica of the Kirkburn Sword in the British Museum - ca. 300-200 B.C. Photo courtesy of Roberta Brown. All rights reserved.

**THE FIGHT MASTER**

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# EDITORIALLY SPEAKING

**T**his issue has articles from the past which are still relevant today and some are stepping into the future of what stage combat can be.

Ron Piretti's "Stage combat: A Means of Helping Others" shares his experience of using stage combat techniques as a tool to work with autistic children. These students, who normally avoid eye contact and touch, were able to get involved with using eye contact and touch through stage combat training. This experience was further enhanced by the excited response from their peers when they demonstrated their staged fights giving them a much needed boost to their own self confidence. Who would of thought of stage combat being used to help autistic children?

This issue reprints Hollis Houston's two articles on "Combat as Actor Training" which were published back in July 1982 in *The Fight Master*. Today's teachers of staged combat will find his ideas still relevant today. Houston was the author of *The Actor's Instrument, Body, Theory and Stage* published ten years after this article was first published.

Also in this issue is an article on the body language of aggression by David E. Shapiro, John Hell and Linda Beltz that was printed in *The Fight Master* in October of 1982.

Producer and director J.T. Marlowe takes a look at the Celtic Leaf Sword and its function in *To The Point*. Celtic women fought alongside their men and this article also takes a look at the female warrior Boudica who led invasions not only into Roman cities but also London before her defeat in 60 C.E.

Lee Soroko shares the experience of working on fighting and flying at a workshop with k Jenny Jones and ZFX Flying Effects. Taking a look at what happens with flying and fighting on stage as opposed to film may be a real eye-opener to some readers.

Brandon Burk reviews Jenn Zuko Boughan's new book *Stage Combat: Fisticuffs, Stunts, and Swordplay for Theater and Film* which came out in 2006. She is an adjunct professor of English and Theatre at Metro State College in Denver and has performed with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, the Trouble Clef Theatre and Frequent Flyers Aerial Dance Company.

And Dr. John Callahan shares information on the Grand-Guignol of Paris in his article which was originally a paper delivered at the American Theatre Association's national convention in 1979 and printed in *The Fight Master* that fall. Everyone has heard of the Grand-Guignol but not many know the real facts, some of which are seemingly gruesome. This was a popular form of entertainment in Paris at the end of the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth century. For nearly sixty-five years this theatre basically put on horror plays designed to terrorize the audience.

Articles for *The Fight Master* are accepted at any time. The deadline for the Spring/Summer 2009 issue is November 1, 2008.

# CONTRIBUTING WRITERS



**Brandon Burk** is an Actor/Combatant with the SAFD and Theatrical Combatant with Dueling Arts International. He holds a BA in Theatre from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and an MFA in Performance from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas. In 2007 he won the David L. Boushey Award in unarmed combat.

No  
Photo  
Available

**John Callahan** was an associate professor of Drama at the University of Texas at Tyler when he wrote the article on Grand-Guignol.

No  
Photo  
Available

**Hollis Huston**, a former member of the SAFD, is the author of *The Actor's Instrument, Body, Theory and Stage* in 1992. He has taught at Elmira College, Denison University, Southwestern College in Kansas and Washington University in St. Louis.

No  
Photo  
Available

**J.T. Marlowe**, a producer and director, recently completed the documentary *American Beauties: In Pursuit of Art* about the contemporary art scene of Southern California.



**Ron Piretti** is a Fight Director with the SAFD as well as an actor and director. He has staged the fights for over two hundred plays and several independent films. He currently teaches acting at Marymount Manhattan College in NYC. He received his MFA from the Goodman School of Drama in Chicago.



**Lee Soroko** is a Certified Teacher with the Society of American Fight Directors and a lecturer in movement and acting at the University of Miami, Florida.

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

Submissions should be sent to:  
*The Fight Master*  
UNLV Dept. of Theatre, 4505 Maryland Parkway  
Las Vegas, NV 89154-5044

Fax: (702) 895-0833 ♦ E-mail: linda.mccollum@unlv.edu

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 the address, phone/fax numbers and e-mail address in the correspondence.

# GRAPHICALLY SPEAKING

**T**he Fight Master is always seeking active photos of stage combat for upcoming issues. Black and white and color prints (no smaller than 4" x 6") will be accepted. All photos should include the 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. 8" x 10" prints with strong vertical orientations are also desired for covers; these should be shot as close up as possible (full bodies need not be visible).

Digital camera photographs must meet the following additional criteria:

- |                             |                              |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|
| <b>Cover Photographs:</b>   | <b>Interior Photographs:</b> |
| ♦ 1200 dpi (dots per inch)  | ♦ 300 dpi (dots per inch)    |
| ♦ Vertical orientation      | ♦ Any orientation            |
| ♦ .tif or .jpg file formats | ♦ .tif or .jpg file formats  |

The deadline for graphic material for the Fall/Winter issue is July 31, for the Spring/Summer issue is January 31. 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:

**John Tovar**  
124 Lakeside Drive, Apt. 531  
St. Charles, IL 60174-7910

If there are any questions, please feel free to call (630) 330-4293 or e-mail [john\\_tovar@sbcglobal.net](mailto:john_tovar@sbcglobal.net). Again, exciting photos are encouraged from all levels of the SAFD membership.

John Tovar

## Workshop Coordinators and Advertisers

The Fight Master advertises non-SAFD workshops and services, including:

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Workshops that have officially been sanctioned as SAFD workshops as detailed in the Policies & Procedures are entitled to a free 1/4 page ad in *The Fight Master*. Larger ads may be purchased at a discounted rate. Non-SAFD workshop ads may be purchased at full price. Ads can be designed by a graphic designer for a slight fee. For more information please contact:

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Notification for advertising in the Spring/Summer issue must be received by December 1; artwork due by January 15. Notification for the Fall/Winter issue must be received by July 1; artwork due by August 15. Please call for rates or other information.

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# THE FIGHT MASTER

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<b>Editor</b>	Linda Carlyle McCollum	<a href="mailto:linda.mccollum@unlv.edu">linda.mccollum@unlv.edu</a>
<b>Associate Editor</b>	Julie Artman	<a href="mailto:artman@chapman.edu">artman@chapman.edu</a>
<b>Art Director</b>	John Tovar	<a href="mailto:john_tovar@sbcglobal.net">john_tovar@sbcglobal.net</a>
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Cara Rawlings, Assistant Professor, Virginia Tech

Theatre VCU provided me with the opportunity to feed my scholarly pursuits and helped me develop my artistic sensibilities. My education at VCU helped provide a support and foundation for a career in theatre and my life as a scholar.

Tiza Garland, Assistant Professor, University of Florida

My time at VCU was invaluable. Even after 14 years experience as a teacher the pedagogy program helped take my teaching career to the next level. I owe a lot to Theatre VCU and often recommend it!

Jamie Cheatham, Assistant Professor/ Head of Acting, University of Wisconsin - Parkside

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Metamorphoses, Movement Coaches,  
Jonathan Becker & Tonia Campanella

# LE THEATRE DU GRAND-GUIGNOL DE PARIS: THEATRE OF TERROR, SHRIEKS AND HORRIPILATION

by Dr. John Callahan

Reprinted from *The Fight Master*, October, 1979

A paper delivered at the American Theatre Association national convention in New York City, August 4, 1979.

*Le Theatre du Grand-Guignol de Paris* lasted for almost sixty-five years, from 1897 till late in 1962, and although the term "Grand Guignol" translates as "Big Puppet," the theatre was not for children, and was instead devoted to realistic horror plays designed to terrorize its audiences. Since the Grand-Guignol's opening, the French have used the adjective *gradaguignolesque* to describe any such fiendish melodramas. For most of its career, the Grand-Guignol used pure terror to hypnotize its patrons, and averaged four murders a night—probably the longest running crime wave in history. "Aided by trick lighting, fearsome props and make-up, the Guignolers [went] happily, if homicidally, about their business of gouging out one another's eyes, cooking villains in vats of sulphuric acid, hurling vitriol and cutting throats, all to the accompaniment of hysterical laughter and hideous shrieks."

The depiction of horror, while simulated, was quite realistic, and fainting spells were common in the audience. The Grand-Guignol was where tourists, voyeurs, and native Parisians went to be scared to death prior to World War II. After this war, the Grand-Guignol was tame stuff and Paris audiences began to laugh, while American tourists became the main clientele. The situation deteriorated until the theatre closed its doors in 1962.

The Grand-Guignol believed in the concept of *la douche écosaise*, or "the hot and cold shower," meaning the alternation of horror and humor plays. A typical Grand-Guignoler was a one-act, and the Grand-Guignol usually presented four such plays a night, two horror plays and two comedies. But while the Grand-Guignol would present farcical comedies before and after their horrifying plays, terror was always the main attraction of the evening—terror achieved through the heights of stage violence tricks. These tricks were basically simplistic, depending upon illusionism and machinery and especially slight-of-hand. To act at the Grand-Guignol was to be a magician. But the primary ingredient of the Grand-Guignol was the recipe for the still secret Guignol blood was which changed colors as it cooled, actually coagulated and made scabs and came in nine shades! Many critics have hailed this last effect as the *pièce de résistance* of the Guignol's stable of terrifying tricks.

For its patrons, the Grand-Guignol was a chance to be scared in complete safety. Audiences enjoy being frightened, as the box office receipts of movies such as *The Exorcist* (the original, please) and the current *Alien* will attest. Most people are vicari-

ous lovers of violence and danger, and the majority of people find the realistic depiction of violence to be cathartic. People went to the Grand-Guignol to be scared, to be able to hug their girlfriend or boyfriend, to release their own sadism and/or masochism. It was a great time for everybody. But perhaps instead of saying people "enjoy being scared," one should say people "enjoy being not bored." Horror plays are one way of achieving a state of heightened consciousness, with little or no addiction problems, and absolutely no withdrawal symptoms except a sigh of relief when the play is over. People have enjoyed, and always will enjoy, not being bored. The Grand-Guignol was able to last for sixty-five years simply because it did not bore people. And when it did bore, after reality had far outdistanced its horrors, it closed.

The building in which the Grand Guignol was located on the Rue Chaptal in Montmartre was built in 1786 by the Jansenists, an ultra-conservative Catholic Group, and was later made into a convent. (Montmartre has since become the artists' and bohemians' section of Paris.) During the purge of religion under the Revolution, the building was sacked, but the chapel survived untouched, and it was this chapel that became the physical setting for the Grand-Guignol Theatre. In 1880 the chapel was closed by order of the Bishop of Paris. In 1896 when Maurice Magnier converted the chapel into an intimate, 285 seat theatre, he retained the chapel *motif*. Thus, some of the worst manglings, acid throwings and vile murders have been witnessed by carved cherubs and seven-foot angels, while the loges look vaguely like confessionals and the balcony seats like pews.

The Guignol was begun as part of the art, little theatre movement, and was dedicated to naturalism. André Antoine's Théâtre Libre, located just off the Place Pigalle in Montmartre, not more than a ten minute walk from the Grand-Guignol, was one of the early inspirations for the Grand Guignol. The Théâtre du Grand-Guignol opened in 1897 under the leadership of Oscar Méténier, a playwright who had had several of his works produced at the Théâtre Libre. Méténier served his public brief, naturalistic "slices of life-in-the-raw." The opening bill of the Guignol, on April 3, 1897, consisted of seven short plays, including *Mademoiselle Fifi* by Méténier himself, a play which would become a Grand-Guignol classic with over 2,000 performances. *Mademoiselle Fifi* tells of a young French prostitute who knifes a German officer in the chest. Thus, from the first night of its existence, the Grand-Guignol dealt with violence, terror and graphic representations of the seamier side of life.

In 1898, after turning over the management of the theatre to Max



Maurey, Ménétier (who used to arrive at the theatre between two bodyguards) simply disappeared. Maurey replaced Méténier's "slice-of life" plays with "slice of death" plays, and he decreed that the staple of the Grand-Guignol was to be terror rather than naturalism. By 1900 the Grand-Guignol was a thriving enterprise.

Max Maurey advertised the Grand-Guignol as the "House of Horror" and he reprinted newspaper cartoons showing Grand-Guignol customers having medical check-ups before purchasing their tickets. One of his best promotional schemes was to add a house physician to the staff of the theatre—a doctor who would be in attendance to administer to anyone overcome from fright. However, on the doctor's first night of duty a spectator fainted and the ushers could not locate the doctor. When the victim regained consciousness he meekly confessed that he himself was the doctor.

Among the plays produced during the Maurey management were these classics of horror: *Le Système du Docteur Goudron et Professor Plume*, 1903, which features madness, eye gouging, and surgery; *La Dernière Torture*, 1904, which deals with the Boxer Rebellion in China, shows a Frenchman's hands being cut off at the wrist, and also features a father shooting his daughter in the head only to find that the approaching army is French, not Chinese, and he then goes insane; *Les Nuits du Hampton Club*, 1908, shows a self-inflicted gunshot to the head on stage (shades of *The Deer Hunter*!); *Une Leçon à la Salpêtrière*, 1908, presents a bottle of sulphuric acid being thrown in a character's face; and finally, *L'Horrible Expérience*, 1909, shows a doctor using electric shock to restore his dead daughter to life, however, the doctor only succeeds in causing his daughter's arms to grab him at the neck and choke him to death.

When World War I began, Maurey chose as his successor Camille Choisy, and it was under the Choisy management that the theatre attained its greatest successes and world-wide fame. Some of the more popular plays during this management were *Le Laboratoire des Hallucinations*, 1916, which depicts insanity, open brain surgery with the back of the victim's head visible to the audience, an extramarital love affair, and finally a chisel through a man's forehead—this play, not surprisingly, became a Grand-Guignol classic. In *Au Petit Jour*, 1921, the guillotine beheads a man onstage, and in *Les Jardins des Supplices*, 1922, the playwright shows the flesh being cut off a young girl, and a red-hot needle piercing a woman's eye; In *La Maison des Hommes Vivants*, 1923, murderers drink the blood of their victims; and in another Grand-Guignol classic, *Un Crime dans une Maison de Fous*, 1925, one can see an eye gouging with long surgical scissors and a woman's face sizzling on a hot plate; and in *Le Baiser de Sang*, a man amputates his own finger onstage (for an idea of just how grisly a finger amputation can be, see the Clint Eastwood movie, *Escape from Alcatraz*).

Between the world wars the undisputed Queen of the Grand Guignol was a generously proportioned actress called Maxa. No character in the Comte de Sade's novels ever suffered so many wrongs. Not an inch of her body was spared. She died more than 10,000 times in some sixty different ways, and was raped more

than 3,000 times. Only one other performer ever came close to her, Maryse Leroy, who, as a result of her thousands of deaths, came to be called 'The Lady of the Pere-Lachaise' (Paris' largest cemetery). This did not prevent her from fainting on stage one evening when her partner was seized with a genuine nosebleed.

In 1930 Choisy left the Grand-Guignol and Jack Jouvin took control, and Jouvin gave up his reins in 1937 to an Englishwoman, Eva Bergson. Miss Bergson fled to England after the fall of France but the Grand-Guignol continued to operate during the Occupation and was very popular with the Germans. Miss Bergson returned in 1945, only to find that Parisians now laughed at what had previously terrified them. The theatre became an important tourist attraction, but was hopelessly out-of-touch with post-war Parisians. Among the famous people who attended the Grand-Guignol during this period were Herman Goering, Robert Anderson and Ho Chi Minh (although not on the same night). General George S. Patton, old "Blood and Guts" himself, watched a performance prompting Paris newspapers to write "'Blood and Guts at the Grand Guignol' whereupon the box office received large numbers of orders for tickets to the new spectacle—'Blood and Guts.'" The theatre's decline was further documented by *Time* magazine in 1947: "It was not like the old days; there were only three gruesome murders, and there was no torture more horrendous than a barehanded strangulation. Nobody in the audience even fainted. The spectator...lounged around on rough wooden benches and had a modest emotional binge. A few couples in screened *baignoires* had another kind of binge on the indifferent house champagne."

The Grand-Guignol continued to flounder after World War II, and in 1951 Miss Bergson retired. The Grand-Guignol went through a series of temporary managements, then settled upon Madam Raymonde Machard from 1954 to 1958. Fred Pascale succeeded her, and after him came Charles Nonon, the last director of the Grand-Guignol. The theatre closed in late 1962 and *Time* magazine reported thusly on the demise of the venerable institution:

The last clotted eyeball has plopped onto the stage. The last entrail has been pulled like an earthworm from a conscious victim....Only recently audiences watched a nude and lissome actress nailed to a cross and carved to pieces by a group of gypsy magicians chanting something that sounded like a Protestant hymn sung backwards. Still another victim—popular with modern fans—was bound, gagged, and whipped; then the tips of her breasts were clipped off with hedge shears and her eyes were scooped out with a soup spoon and a jackknife. "We are very proud of that sequence," said Charles Nonon...."We consider it original, at least on-stage."

World War II began the end of the Grand Guignol. "We could never equal Buchenwald," moaned Nonon. Where audiences once cowered in fear; they started to whinny.

Technically, the postwar Grand Guignol was as good as ever. First-rate viscera were made from red rubber hose and sponges soaked in blood. Hand bulbs squirted blood

through a hollow in the spoons that gouged out victims' eyes. The blood really curdled. It came in nine shades, and was mixed daily by Director Nonon.

In a sense, Charles Nonon was the Escoffier of the Grand Guignol. For eye-gouging scenes, he bought eyeballs from taxidermists, coated them with aspic, and stuffed them with three anchovies marinated in blood. In Paris last week, there was a rumor that Nonon will soon open a quiet little restaurant on the Rue Morgue.

Along with eyeballs stuffed with anchovies, the Grand-Guignolers excelled in make-up tricks, with one specialty being a "boiled, partly skinned head (the actor is wrapped in a silk stocking and covered with putty, sponge, cloth and 'blood')."

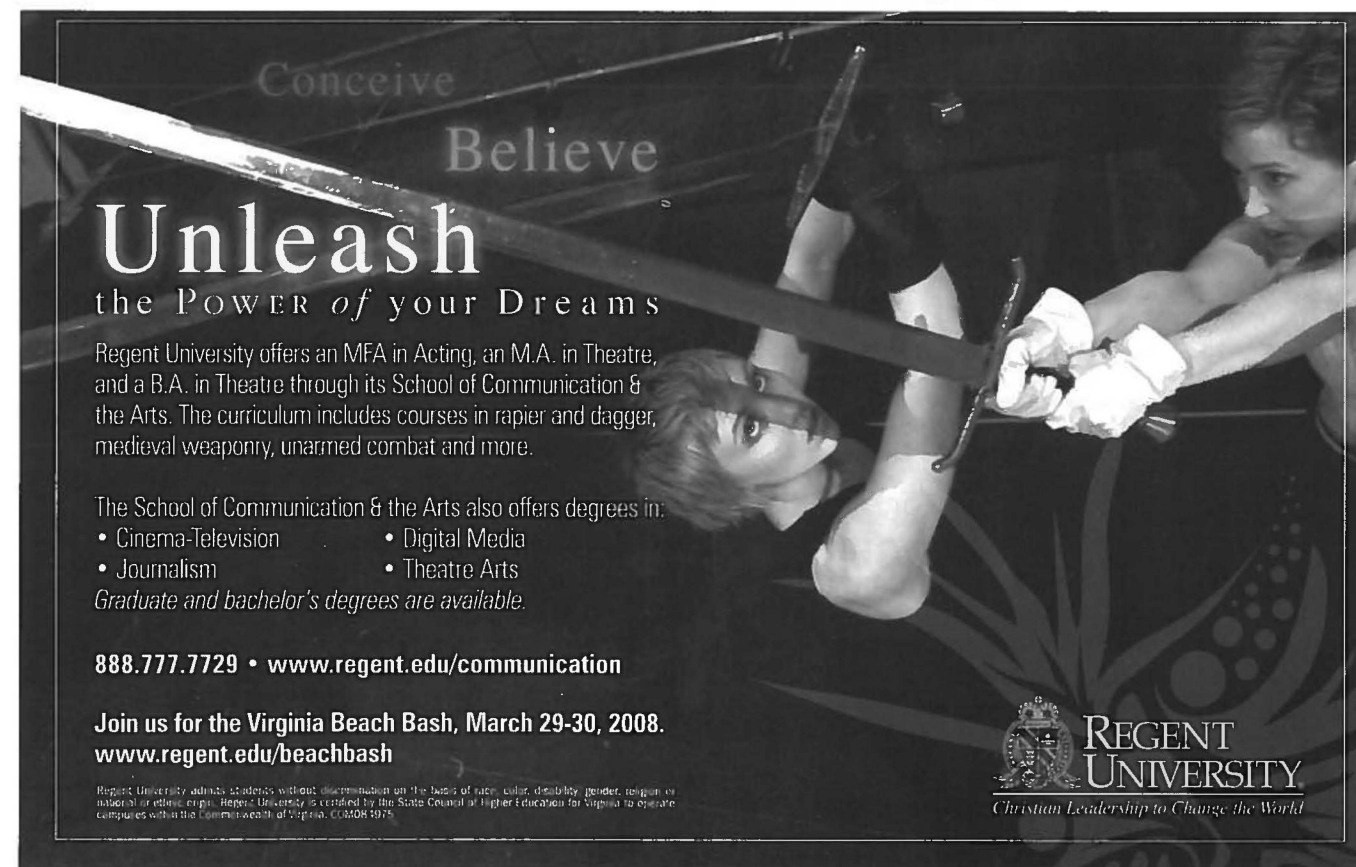
Most of the Grand-Guignol violence tricks were extremely simple using trick lighting, mirrors, make-up, slight-of-hand and the imagination of the audience. For example, in an Italian documentary movie titled *Ecco* (1965), a Grand-Guignol actor cuts off a woman's arm at the shoulder while she is strapped to a table. This trick was accomplished by the woman pushing her arm down hard on a slat of the table made to roll over when pushed, the bottom of the table prepared with a fake arm already attached, dressed to match the actress' real arm at the shoulder. Just before the moment the table rolls over, the actor crosses in front of her, thus keeping the audience from seeing the maneuver. He then proceeds to dissect the fake arms, with any blood coming from the handle of the cutting instrument, being squeezed out through the blade. A device similar to this has been used for centuries to show the results of a decapitation.

The girl whose nipples were cut off with hedge shears could have been wearing a bra with a realistic breast and foam rubber nipple placed on the outside of the cup, or an even simpler method of doing this trick, and one favored many times in the movies for an on-screen amputation, would have been to hire a woman with a mastectomy, place a prosthetic breast over her scar tissue, and then slice away the fake nipple.

In a trick that goes back to the middle ages, chewing on a bar of soap could imitate the foamings at the mouth of a madman, or a victim of rabies. Knives were used with collapsible blades, or knives with dull blades which retreated into the handle upon contact. The trick of having a bend or half-circle loop in the blade of the knife or the shaft of an arrow is well-known, and even used for comedy effect by Steven Martin, but as is the case with many well-known tricks, it is still effective when used by actors who play the scene realistically.

In 1856 in *L'Orgie dans le Phase* the Grand-Guignol hung a girl on a hook, but hanging tricks have been done for centuries. In this same play, fire effects were achieved with a lycopodium torch, a device which Paris first saw in 1765, which produces brilliantly bright red flames with little danger because it burns its vegetable powder-fuel almost instantaneously. Lycopodium powder was commonly used in the nineteenth century for lightning effects and for when people needed to appear to be enveloped in flames.

For the sixty-five years the Grand-Guignol entertained audiences through terror and laughter, stage trickery and realistic acting. Its end was caused by reality outstripping the imaginary horrors of the little theatre, but *le theatre du Grand-Guignol de Paris* left the theatre world with many fond, if gruesome, memories. ♦♦♦



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# STAGE COMBAT: A MEANS OF HELPING OTHERS

by Ron Piretti

I have always loved stage combat. The first time I picked up a sword was as an apprentice at the New Jersey Shakespeare Festival in 1972. Since then stage combat has been a part of my life. I never thought of using this discipline for any other reason than as part of my skill as an actor and then, later, as a director, fight director and teacher. As I became more proficient and felt it was time to pass the discipline on to others, my goal was to teach others how to safely and effectively execute the techniques. I always emphasize safety. In fact, more than one group of people had nicknamed me "Safety First." For those who wanted to go on and excel in this discipline, I sent them to SAFD workshops and teachers where I knew they would get excellent training. But mostly, I wanted actors to know that there was a way to perform stage violence in an exciting and safe way which tells the story of the play or film.

Along the way, I have had the great, good fortune of using stage combat as a tool to help others who have not had the same breaks I have had. In the mid to late 1980's, I was part of the theatre community of MCC (Manhattan Class Company) in NYC. For quite a few summers, members of the community would go up to Newport, Rhode Island to put together a show for an organization called "Shake a Leg." Shake a Leg was founded "to support individuals who experienced spinal cord injury and other disabilities to develop the skills needed to live up to their highest potential." I was asked to go up and stage a fight for a show that MCC was putting together. We used both disabled and able-bodied participants. Those who could do more did. The sense of fun and creativity was satisfying and rewarding for me as well as all those involved in the show.

I was also asked to work with "at risk" high school students. Some of the students were at this school because it was their last chance before being kicked out of the school system. I discovered that the discipline of stage combat worked very well. In today's society we are inundated with violence on TV, film, cartoons, etc., so there is an interest in how this violence is done. The basic element of stage combat is working together in a safe and effective way. In stage combat, we take care of our partners.

In January of 2007, and again in May of 2007, Ann Reinking at the Gateway Academy in Scottsdale, Arizona called and asked me to conduct a stage combat workshop where her son was attending school. The school was established for students who have been diagnosed with high functioning autism. I do not have experience with special needs individuals but when Ann Reinking has invited me in the past to work on a project, I have always been wonderfully challenged and I have grown as an artist in ways I never could have imagined. So I said, "I'd love to."

According to the Columbia Encyclopedia, "Autism is a develop-

mental disability that comes from a neurological disorder that affects the normal functioning of the brain. It is characterized by the abnormal development of communication skills, social skills, and reasoning."

Those who have high functioning autism often spend time alone, because they are bullied and teased by typical children. They want friends but do not have the social skills to keep friends. Another characteristic of autism is what some people describe as "sensory overload": Sounds seem louder, lights brighter, smells stronger, and they do not like being touched. Autism is known as a spectrum disorder because there are a broad range of symptoms.

I have learned that those who have autism have difficulty with eye contact, physical contact and trust. In stage combat, eye contact and touching are paramount in the execution of the actions. I decided that my approach would be no different from any other beginning stage combat class I have taught, and would adapt as circumstances dictated.

First I made sure that the floor had mats installed in our work area. There was always another teacher in the room along with Ms. Reinking. They partnered with a student if there were an odd number of students in the class. I never was sure if a direction I might give would confuse or overwhelm a student. For example, I wanted to switch partners after a particular game we had played. Little did I know that for those who have autism, change is not everyone's friend and can cause some tension and anxiety. So they stayed with the same partners. In the second workshop that issue did not come up because I elected to have everyone stay with the same partner.

I explained that our primary concern was safety. In order to stay safe we would perform the movements very slowly. I told them that we are all partners and we must make sure that we are aware of our surroundings and where each person is located. I started out with some simple stretches and warm-up exercises. I had them stretch up to the ceiling, and then drop over. As we dropped over, I asked them to make a sound. We did this several times and made a louder sound each time. This loosened up the class, got them moving and gave them permission to have fun.

I have discovered that adapting childhood games also serves to loosen up a class. I incorporated games which J.D. Martinez uses in his book, *Combat Mime*, to help the participants become aware of changes in balance in their partner. The first game we played was the "Tightrope Wrestle." Right foot is placed on the outside of the partner's right foot and then they shake hands. I instructed them that the objective was to move around, staying in one place, using their legs and knees to feel each other's balance. They were not to forcibly push or pull their partner off balance and all the

while maintain eye contact. I then asked them to close their eyes and repeat the same exercise. Next, I had them do the “Heron Wrestle.” In this exercise, they stand apart and hold one leg off the floor while maintaining eye contact and become aware of the changes in each other’s balance. Again, I had them do the exercise with their eyes closed. I only do these exercises for a few moments because there is a time constraint and I wanted to keep them moving along and not give too much time for thinking.

Then we moved on to a distance exercise, “Shoulder Tag.” Facing each other, A extends his arm and places it on his partner B to establish distance. When the distance is found, A tries to touch B’s shoulder as B tries to avoid the touch. I asked them to bring their hands down to their sides before each touch. They must, once again, maintain eye contact.

Next we did the “Underhand Touch.” The participants have their hands outstretched. A has his hand on top, palms down, and B has his hands underneath, palms up. B tries to tap the top of A’s hand, A takes it away before his hand is touched. I stress that there is no slapping and it is just a touch. Again, they must maintain eye contact.

Finally, I used this game for eye contact and then action. A stands with his back to B. B taps A on the shoulder. A turns slowly around with his head down. When A has completely turned around he lifts his head and when eye contact is made B once again taps A’s shoulder. After several turns they switched.

A	B
	Has his back to A.
A walks up behind B, places his left hand on B’s right shoulder. Make sure to be off to the side and not directly behind B.	Takes a step back with right foot and then steps forward with his right and goes into the front fall. Gets up, slowly turns, gets eye contact, slowly walk over to A. Puts right hand on A’s right shoulder making sure he is off line of B. Shoulder shove.
Turn slowly, eye contact, slowly walk over to B. Put right hand on B’s right shoulder. Shoulder shove.	Slow turn, eye contact; Prep the hand for a slap (out of distance, in fact, across the room); slap.
A knaps; (The Society of American Fight Directors defines a knap as a technique “for creating the sound of impact of a non-contact blow, to help heighten the illusion that contact has been made”) turn the head in the direction of the slap; eye contact; prep the hand for a slap (again, across the room); slap.	B knaps; eye contact, walk over to A for the hair pull. Hand on head.

Hair Pull

- With your opened right hand make an arc, as if you are reaching around your partner’s head. Do not thrust the arm directly at your partner to avoid hitting your partner in the face or poking an eye.
- Do not grab hair but close the hand lightly just before placing hand on partner’s head.

The first combination I decided to teach was a simple one. We began with pushing. I broke the movement down so they would do it in slow motion. I explained to the class that the victim is the one who controls the movement. I explained to them that the movements will seem very fake and not realistic because they are just learning how to execute them. They must go slowly at first. I had them do everything in a very exaggerated style. I gave them the image of the movie *The Matrix* and decided that the bigger the movement, the safer it would be.

I first taught them how to push by breaking the movements down, in order for them to perform the action in slow motion. I assigned each the letter A or B. I asked B to put his right foot forward and A to put his right foot outside of B’s. A put his hand on B’s shoulder and B initiates the movement. A follows making sure that there is no pressure in the shove. B turns in the direction of the push, making sure he sees where he is going.

The next move was the front fall. I asked them to take a big lunge step, place their hands on either side of the front foot. They then brought the forward foot back and lowered themselves down as in a push-up, making sure to turn the head to the side as they lowered themselves. I discovered that this was an effective way to teach the fall in slow motion.

Now we began the combination. I decided that the first cue would be a touch rather than eye contact.

- When the hand is placed on the head, the person who is getting his hair pulled should place his hand on the top of his partner’s hand so the hand will not slip off and the victim can be in control of the movement.
- Make sure the elbows are out of the way. Be aware of where they are at all times. To do that I instructed them to by keep their forearms together.
- Each time they bob their head they were told to make eye contact. This ensured that they would not hit each other and would use their legs to go up and down rather than bending at the waist.

A	B
A puts hand on B, bobs up and down 3 times; walk in a circle after one revolution A stops, takes a step back and gets thrown to the opposite end of room; eye contact; walk over to B for two handed hair pull; A puts hands on side of B’s head (as if reaching around the head only this time with two hands).	Put hands on A’s hands to keep the hands on the head; keep eye contact and bob up and down using the knees never bring the head forward. That is why eye contact is needed. After the 3 <sup>rd</sup> bob let go the A’s hand and scream as if hair was pulled out of your head.
Eye Contact; Walk to each other and Shake hands. End of combination.	

After they had learned the combination, we presented it for the students and teachers of the school.

Observations

Stage combat allowed these “at risk” students to work at something to which they can relate and, at the same time, learn to work together.

When I was asked by Ms. Reinking to conduct a stage combat class for high functioning autistic students, I was not sure how to proceed. Sometimes not knowing what one is getting into makes it easier than knowing what to expect. For example, I did not know about the difficulty with eye contact and touching, therefore, I had no trepidation about asking them to do the exercises which required them to look each other in the eye and touch. They knew it was required of them for this class and they participated wholeheartedly. It also gave them a structured and safe way of looking at each other. I was very satisfied when I heard the participants reminding each other to maintain eye contact. I am not qualified in drama and dance therapies but they are used beneficially all the time and now perhaps stage combat can be added to that list.

It is indescribable to express the feeling I had when I saw the joy and pride on the faces of the participants after having had presented their work in front of their peers and then greeted with wonderfully enthusiastic applause. Or feeling like I may have made a small difference, when a tear filled father thanked me after watching his son perform something he, never in his wildest dreams, thought his son would do. This father said to me that, after all his son had been through, just the fact that he did it is amazing.

I would like to thank Ann Reinking for coming up with the idea and asking me to give this workshop and Robin Sweet, Executive Director of Gateway Academy, for her openness in allowing me to teach stage combat to her students. Stage combat, at least to my knowledge, has never been used in this way.

One of the negative outcomes came up after a discussion about stunt people. I had told them that whenever they see stunts in movies and on television, they have been very well rehearsed because safety is most important. One of the students told the head of the school that I had ruined movies for him forever because now he knows how some things are done. But at least he knows about safety.

In these experiences with Shake-a-Leg, “at risk students” and Gateway Academy, I have had the wonderful opportunity to use the profession I love and the skills I have learned to give back something positive to others. And, hopefully, teach them a way to communicate and work together in a fun, safe and organized environment. When I started out, I never thought that anything called “stage combat” could be used to teach others how to work together, get along and, perhaps, at least for a time make their world a better place.





# THE BODY LANGUAGE OF AGGRESSION: TRAINING THE COMBATANT ACTOR

by David E. Shapiro, John Heil, and Linda Beltz

Reprinted from *The Fight Master*, October 1982

The special skills of a fight director should go beyond choreographing weapon play or fisticuffs, just as the emotional impact of a fight scene should extend beyond the fracas itself. Directors can and should teach actors not only how to work with violence in the theatre, but also how to maintain continuity and integrity of feelings portrayed before, during, and after the fight. This means integrating actors' total expression—choreographing not only the ballet of movement, but also the emotional flow of the scene.

Gestures and expressions, which are the symbols by which we communicate emotion, derive from natural patterns of movement. Thus consciousness of action patterns can give actors greater facility in portraying emotion.

Students of dueling may be familiar with the origins of certain formal gestures. One example is the open hand extended in greeting, a custom of universal meaning whose origins reach to antiquity. This gesture is believed to have originated as a sign of friendliness showing that no weapon was held and that no physical threat was intended. In contrast, it is theorized by social scientists that the narrowed eyes and tense jaw, neck, shoulders and arms of the angry human derive from the primitive instinct of our apelike ancestors to fix their vision upon an enemy, and to attack with hands and teeth if necessary.

While historians shed interesting light on the development of formal gestures through the age of chivalry and earlier, the writings on body language most germane to fight directors are those of other social scientists. Since the time of Charles Darwin, psychologists and anthropologists have studied body language, especially that related to aggression. Desmond Morris, author of *The Naked Ape*, develops the view that expressions of emotion are derived directly from primitive behaviors existing in modern humans as vestigial representations of instincts. A research group led by Paul Ekman and Wallace Friesen, of the University of California, San Francisco Medical Center, have focused their study on the human face. In *Emotion in the Human Face*, they identify a set of categories of feeling that may be detected in facial expression and show that facial expression constitutes a universal language. In *Unmasking the Face*, they reduce all facial displays of emotion into combinations of designated muscle movements. This work also functions as a training manual that provides instruction on how to read faces; and, how to construct credible emotional expression through careful attention to specific small muscle movement. So thorough and so applied to orientation is *Unmasking the Face* that Ekman and Friesen might just as well have designed this work specifically for the use of directors and acting coaches.

The task of the director is to ensure congruence and continuity so

that the movement of a fight scene proceeds naturally from the postural and other physical messages presaging it. The director must guide the actors in their work with voice qualities, movement, posture and facial expression so that these elements are built into the flesh of a play, to clothe the bare bones of the script. For example, when in *King Lear*, Oswald confronts Edgar, the scene is fraught with menace. It would be astonishing to see Edgar fight and then kill Oswald if the actors slouched and spoke calmly during the preceding conversation. Any member of the audience—bellicose or benign—would sense the incongruence of the scene played in this way.

An actor with martial arts training is best prepared to engage in stage combat having dwelt in the experience of aggression and having become familiar with caution, confusion, anger, fear, helplessness and triumph in the context of the fight. A fight director can therefore draw on the heightened sensibility that this emotional base provides. In the case of actors without this combative experience, there is still a reservoir of personal knowledge on which to draw. For all who wish to engage in stage combat, bridges must be created between this reserve of personal knowledge and the practical demands that the fight sequence places upon the actor, so that the fight may be played in a way that maximally enhances the development of the character. The foundation upon which those bridges are to be built is body awareness.

There are many theatre games that either teach or can be adapted to teach body awareness. The "tense muscle" exercise that Viola Spolin describes in *Improvisations for the Theatre* is one example. Fight directors can (an many, no doubt do) develop exercises that will enable students to tap their reserves of personal knowledge. An example follows which is oriented in particular to fight training.

Have a pair of students spar "freestyle" in slow motion using any weaponed or unarmed approach with which they have some familiarity. The other students should observe the action taking care to attend to those stylistic elements of movement that compose a physical attitude. These include: orientation to the opponent, posture and facial expression, weapon grip, breathing patterns and rhythm of motion, etc.

When at least one of the combatants has developed a distinct physical attitude (this may take some time!) the action may be stopped and this "attitude" studied. Begin by describing in a holistic way what the combatant has conveyed. This can be followed by a more detailed look at the particular stylistic elements of movement. It may also be useful to tap into the actors' "stream of consciousness" having them note the flow of images and feelings that they experience during the fight. The others should then mimic this "attitude" taking their turn at

sparring "freestyle" in slow motion. If work with the physical attitude in its holistic form proves unsuccessful, it would then be advisable to work with one or more of the stylistic elements which compose the physical attitude. If this activity does not yield satisfactory results it would be worthwhile to lead the actors through a sequence of "guided imagery." To do this have everyone lie down, close their eyes and let themselves relax.

After a time, have them recreate in their imaginations the fight they have observed and then have them imagine themselves performing those same actions.

This particular process may be enhanced by having everyone focus on the images that were experienced by the initial set of combatants; by imagining significant literary or historical figures engaging in combat; by calling to mind "stage fights" of high quality that had been observed on previous occasions, etc. The use of dialogue should be reserved until the combatants are quite comfortable with the physical dimensions of the fight. However, in the early stages of practice, the use of non-verbal vocal utterances might prove helpful given that these arise naturally. Finally it would be useful to explore the effect of the physical attitude as developed or in intensified or in diminished form on simple physical behaviors—entrances, exits, approaches toward other actors, etc.

In addition to those works previously mentioned there are other works by psychologists that may help the actor to come to an enhanced understanding of the relationship between mind and

body and, of the human mechanisms of emotional expression. In *Nonverbal Communication*, body language researcher Albert Mehrabian details the relationship between physical gesture and emotional state focusing on the role of body language in the communication of mood states. In contrast, bioenergetic psychotherapist Alexander Lowen, is more concerned with the relationship between deep seated muscular tension and personality type and with the insight into personality that may be gained by the study of body type.

By recognizing posture, facial expression and other elements of physical attitude that occur during fight training and by working with physical attitude both fight directors and combatant actors can enhance the effectiveness with which they may play a fight. In this way fight directors can better ensure that stage combat is well integrated into the emotional flow of the drama and can better help actors develop their craft.

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# TO THE POINT In Your Face: The Celtic Leaf Sword

by J.T. Marlowe

• Wide leaf-shaped sword strengthens blade power for decapitations. Sharp double-edged blade intensifies quick cutting and slashing fighting action. Used by Queen Boudica in her rebellion against the Romans in 60 C.E.

## Celtic Warriors

The Roman historian Tacitus reported Queen Boudica's rebellion against the Romans in 60 C.E. As Boudica descended from her chariot, she may have engaged her enemies with the **Celtic Leaf Sword**, slashing and cutting her way to victory, before her eventual defeat by the Romans.

From the Celtic warrior cult of the severed heads to the myth of King Arthur's magical Celtic sword Excalibur, what is fact among the fiction sparks intrigue today.

The Celts were a tribal society who roamed Europe from the British Isles to western Romania; from the northern European plain to northern Italy and into Spain. Emperor Julius Caesar and the Romans called them the Gauls and, like the Greeks, they were amazed at their ferocity during battle.

## From Dagger to Leaf Sword

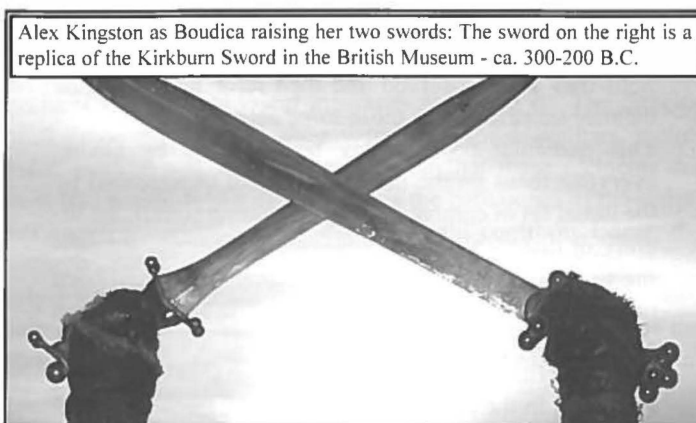
Most likely, the Celtic Leaf Sword evolved from the triangular-shaped Italian dagger of the Bronze Age. Around 1000 B.C., the Nordics, having immigrated to the Hungarian plain, demanded larger weapons for their larger hands and more aggressive fighting style. To meet the demand, the Leaf Sword was introduced and, by the Celtic Iron Age (c. 400 B.C.E. – c. C.E. 100), its unique warfare properties spread across Europe.

Like the Celtic warriors who wielded it, the Celtic Leaf Sword is veiled in mystery and mythology. What we know about the weapon is gathered from ancient writings and observations, and archeological discoveries throughout Europe (most notably from cemeteries of the later La Tène period). The sword was an early weapon choice in the Celtic warrior power. Precursor to the Celtic Long Sword, the leaf-shaped smaller sword may have first appeared during the Celtic Iron Age (c. 400 B.C.E. – c. C.E. 100), or earlier.

Generally, experts note these approximate dimensions:

Length, including hilt: between 54-69 centimeters;  
Width: under 8 centimeters;  
Blade thickness: 8 millimeters.

In its infancy, the grip and simple pommel were most probably composed of wood, bone, or ivory. The blade was constructed primarily of iron, often combined with steel. Earlier blade construction would have been of bronze. Forged, welded, and pounded, the



weight of the weapon would have been lighter due to the poorer metallurgical content and structure. Later swords would have been strengthened by utilizing a twisted pattern-welding technique. Decorated for ceremonial usage, swords often displayed an anthropomorphic-shaped hilt. The scabbard would have been made of leather, sometimes metal, worn on the right.

## Form Follows Function

The form and function of the Celtic Leaf Sword defined the fighting style of the Celtic warriors. The blade tip was duller as the "broader and robust blade developed...making a leaf shape...to enhance the cutting action" (Pleiner 1993). Both sides of the blade were sharpened. Due to its rivet construction, the sword would not have held up during the "delivery of heavy blows" (Pleiner 1993), forcing the quick and close-up cutting and slashing techniques that immortalized the barbaric fighting style of the Celts. Riding their chariots with spears, helmets, and shields, the Celts could use this sword to slash and cut, descending to perform further mayhem, often dismembering and saving the heads of their enemies to later celebrate their victories. Earlier accounts by the Greek philosopher Posidonius and ancient writer Diodorus Siculus, studying the Celts, reported how seemingly unafraid they were of death, often, going into battle naked, but for a loincloth and their sword (Freeman 2002).

And even though the blade material was, for the most part,

inferior (often a warrior would have to bend back the blade after use with the foot), the strength and resolve of the Celts made it a weapon that often overwhelmed their Roman enemies. As horsemanship developed and became part of the fighting arsenal, so did the length of the sword develop to accommodate a thrusting fighting method, forcing the Celtic Leaf Sword's eventual evolution. As the ancient world of the Celts gave way to Roman domination, so, too, did the weaponry adapt to meet the demands of more organized warfare.

Swordmaster Roberta Brown doubling for Alex Kingston in *Boudica*, alongside Emily Blunt (Boudica's daughter), and armed with a smaller Celtic Leaf Sword.



## Leaf Sword in Action: Boudica and her Rebellion

The Roman historian Tacitus reports: "Boudica drove round in a chariot, her daughters with her....She proclaimed that the Britons were well used to the leadership of women in battle" (as cited in Dudley 1963).

Boudica would lose this day to the Romans. Celtic women often fought alongside their men. Boudica had led massacres into Roman cities, including London, killing 70,000 Romans before her eventual defeat in 60 C.E. In hand-to-hand combat, a woman warrior like Boudica could engage a Roman soldier by drawing her leaf sword against the soldier's gladius short sword. The Celts were known to be taller than the Romans. A woman warrior could use this advantage to throw herself atop the soldier, cutting and slashing with raging battle cries before the soldier's sharper pointed gladius could land an opportunistic fatal hit. A disadvantage for the woman warrior may have been some difficulty with the wider and heavier leaf-shape blade, balancing its weight as she either wielded it overhead or slashed side to side. Also, the blade, sometimes composed of several metals combined, could be inferior, adding another advantage to the Roman's quicker thrusting action from his gladius sword.

Celtic warriors were known to dismember and save the heads of their enemies to later celebrate their victories. Boudica, victorious after the massacres, would have proudly displayed the severed Roman heads.

Recent films using the Celtic Leaf Sword include *Boudica*, starring Alex Kingston. And, Mel Gibson is developing and producing another version of the Boudica tale ensuring that the Celtic Leaf Sword's ancient lore still sparks visions of a violent and colorful prehistoric past.

Note: This article is printed with permission from The Women of Action Network. Visit: <http://www.woa.tv/index.html>

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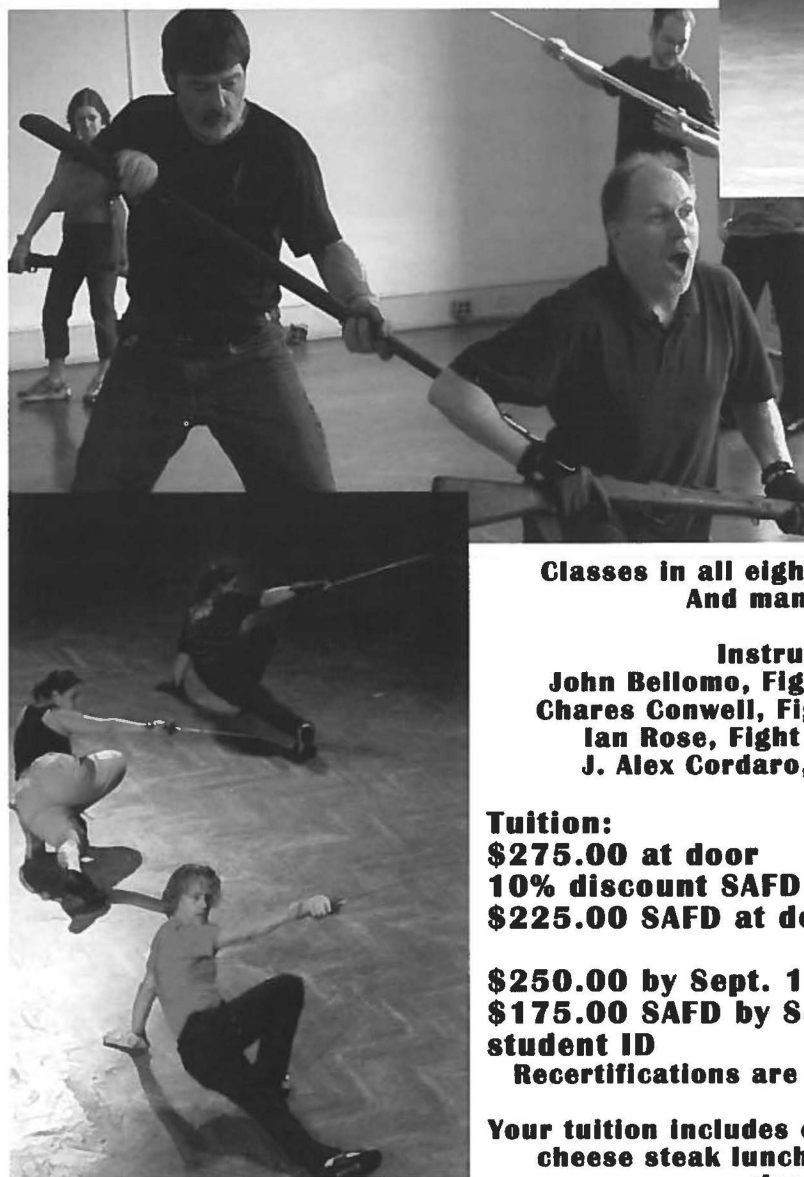


The system of dating and classifying Celtic swords is based upon the cultural archeological evidence from cemeteries in Hallstatt, Austria and La Tène, Switzerland. Hallstatt Period: c.750-c.450/440 B.C.E.; La Tène Period: c.450/440-c.1 B.C.E. Today, you can view the Celtic Leaf Sword in museums. The National Museum of Ireland (Dublin) has a large collection of bronze swords of the Late Bronze Age, some of which are of Hallstatt origin or type. They have a small number of iron swords from the La Tène Iron Age. Photos courtesy of Roberta Brown. All rights reserved.



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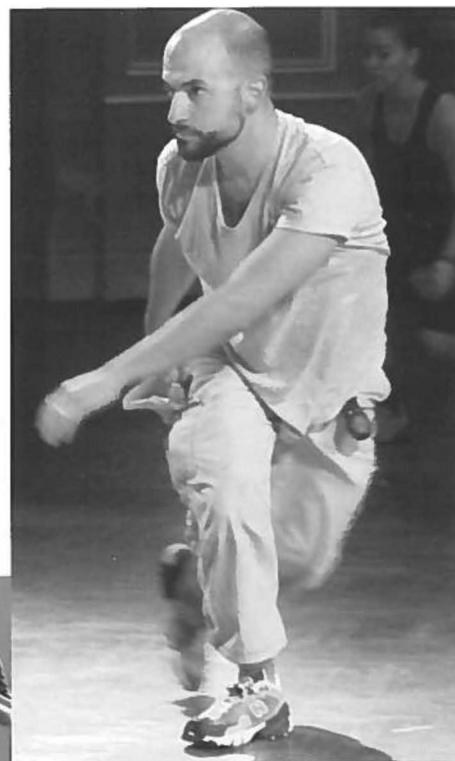
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## COMBAT AS ACTOR TRAINING Parts I & II

by Hollis Houston

Reprinted from *The Fight Master*, July 1982

**G**In an earlier article, I argued that stage combat training is not an accessory skill for actors, but a core component of the modern actor training curriculum. I suggested that if we teach stage combat as a bag of tricks, rather than as a set of images and principles for performance, we deprive ourselves of work, and forfeit any influence we may have over the theatre of the future. For our own protection we must convince the profession and the academy that an actor does not stop acting when he begins to fight. On the contrary, he becomes more of an actor; for theatrical fighting is nothing more than the acting of violence, and the skills it demands are the foundation of all acting: accuracy, courage, commitment, ensemble, and knowledge of time and space.

Knowing the moves will not be enough. We must analyze the trick of the trade down to fundamental principles, which are fundamental principles of the theatre. In the studio, we must present exercises that compel the actor to learn by choosing physical actions. We might call these experiments "proto-combat." They are the germs from which images of violence and other transactions grow. What follows is a teaching unit on proto-combat. I offer it with three uses in mind: 1) as a way to sharpen the physical responses of actor/combatants, 2) as a model of the actor's task, and 3) as a demonstration that stage combat is a part of the actors work rather than a special skill.

The work is presented in the form of three games, to be played by pairs of actors. At any given moment, one of the actors will be active and one passive. We may call them, respectively, initiator and receiver. Each game is aimed at a particular illusion, and each illusion implies more than it defines. Players who fail at the illusions find themselves confronting basic acting problems.

### I. CONTACT

**Controlling Metaphor.** The initiator is an electromagnet, activated when he touches the receiver. There is an instantaneous strong force between the points of contact.

**Rules.** The receiver must respond to the imaginary force when touched by the initiator. First, assume that the two points have similar charges and repel each other. In the counter of that game, assume unlike charges, which means that the actors will have to pull themselves apart. In all of these games, the actors should change roles frequently and when they feel ready they should "converse," exchanging after each action. Staccato vocalization will help the players get the sense of the game.

**Points of Evaluation.** The game sets up an *illusion* between two actors. The synergy of actors, the skill of working in and for a shared image, is called *ensemble*. The test of their ensemble is illusion. If they play well, there seems to be an explosion of force

between the two bodies driving them apart of holding them together. The opposite of ensemble is *self-indulgence*, when actors fail to commit to a shared image, but instead try to project personal images on each other. Self-indulgence makes itself known in many forms of *disagreement*.

The illusion of force at contact takes a certain amount of time—no more, no less. If the receiver moves too soon, he *anticipates* his action. If he moves too late, he *misses* it. In either case, his movement has no *motivation*. The illusion of force motivates actions, makes them seem inevitable. Without the illusion, we see that the actor is moving himself, that his action is arbitrary.

Actors can disagree in space as well as in time. If the receiver moves from a point on his body that was not touched, or if he moves in a direction that his partner did not imprint, he works with *inaccuracy*. If his reactions lack a specific center, so that he moves whole sections of his body rather than the part called upon, he is guilty of *generalization*. Inaccuracy fragments the illusion, while generalization robs it of character.

All these errors are forms of *denial*. They show us that the actors are ignoring each other's messages to follow personal preferences. The initiator, of course, is as responsible as the receiver. If his messages are non-committal or self-contradictory, his partner has nothing to work with, and he must fake his responses. ("Garbage in, garbage out.")

**Lessons to be Learned.** The game is a stage combat exercise, demonstrating that theatrical violence is an illusion. What seems to happen does not really happen, but good players make it seem that they strike each other, pull and push each other around. Violence on the stage, as Joe Martinez writes, is mime. But so is acting. Actors make an ensemble by sharing illusion. The illusion of force leads us to other illusions; flashes of anger, aggression, pain and pride. The game looks like a fight, and at moments we seem to see *who* the characters are and *what* they have to do with each other, not because we mean to, but because a clear physical action refuses to stay on the abstract level.

### II. FIELD OF FORCE

**Controlling Metaphor.** The actors are a pair of bar magnets. Between them and around them is a magnetic field. The closer the magnets, the more intense is the force. There is a critical distance, at which the force of the field is equal to the force of friction holding the magnets in place. Closer than that the magnets will move.

**Rules.** Initiator approaches his partner, and when he comes within critical distance, they both react to the force between them. If the charges are unlike, they come together (Click!). If the charges

are similar, they bounce apart. The approach may cover any amount of space, but it must not be generalized; the actors must respond to each other from specific centers (nose, sternum, right kneecap, left little finger). They may attract or repel each other.

There are many variations of dynamic and duration.

**Points of Evaluation.** In the first game, contact precedes force; in this one, force precedes contact. Good actors seem bound together whether they touch or not. The space around them has a life of its own which defines their relationship. One can judge the ensemble by the sensation of space; does it have energy, pressure, warmth, “the damn thing” (as Mazzone-Clementi named it)?; does it make demands? The “critical distance” is the place, and the moment, at which forces are balanced. Anything is possible, so something must happen. That unfulfilled expectation is called *suspense*. Do the actors make us expect something? Do they let us down?

**Lessons to be Learned.** The contact game looks like fighting, but the Field of Force game looks like love-making. Contact shows how to play an action, but Fields of Force shows how to justify actions. The event is not so important as how we get there. Suspense makes us want something to happen. One shoe, then the other. Dominant, tonic. The door opens-when he comes in, we know it is what we expected (though at the time, we may not have known). We say that the action is *motivated*.

The *crisis* of the game is the moment of equal forces and of suspense. The approach to that moment is the *rising action*. Suspense is *resolved* in action. The moment of choice is the *climax*. Its execution is denouement. In practicing this game, an actor learns that the drama is a shape in space and time.

The game moves our attention from the physical actions of which stage fights are composed to the psychological relationships that justify them. It is not so much about what happens as about what may happen, not so much about speech as about *subtext*. People do not spend a lot of their time touching each other. It is the possibility of touching, and the quality of that potential contact, that defines a relationship. The field of force between two people is both the metaphor and the matrix of their meaning to each other. The Fields of Force game is a poetry of relationship.

### III. BROADCAST

**Controlling Metaphor.** Initiator is a pebble dropped into the center of a still pool. Receiver is a leaf floating at the edge. Waves of energy spread in concentric circles from the point of impact. In time, the leaf is moved; not because the pebble has any particular connection with the leaf, and not because the pebble was aimed at the leaf, but because the pool which they both inhabit transfers the energy from one to the other.

**Rules.** Initiator makes a movement not particularly aimed at the receiver; a sweep of the arm, a circle of the pelvis, a run through the space. Receiver waits for the impact of that action to reach him, and, at the right moment, moves with it.

**Points of Evaluation.** Actors, like people, do not spend all their time touching each other. They do not give all of their energy to each other. There are many things they must sense, many actions

they must play, that are not directed to another person. But they must swim in the same pond. Sooner or later, every choice made on the stage affects every person on the stage. One can judge the ensemble by the illusion of matrix. If two actors share the same imaginary world, they will reflect each others actions even when their attention is elsewhere.

**Lessons to be Learned.** The members of an ensemble must swim in the same pond, but the pond is nothing real. It is, rather, a fictional space whose properties they create together. That fictional space must be there even when they do not touch, even when they do not think of each other; and it is to that space, rather than to his personal emotions, that the actor submits. The stage is not a building, or a platform or a craft union, or a social club; it is the shared illusion of space to which actors submit. Without it there is no theatre. The stage is the actor’s instrument, and the Broadcast game is an exercise in creating the stage.

### IV. OBSERVATIONS

- 1) These games are elementary stage combat exercises. The Contact game sharpens the skills of defining and “selling” the blow. The Field of Force game trains actor/combatants in justifying an action; by finding the subtext from which it comes, and by finding the right moment to commit it. The Broadcast game is training in peripheral awareness, to prevent combatants from blundering into furniture, or colliding with others in a mass battle. All three games teach actors to work accurately and to keep their senses open under stress.

The games progress from fact to metaphor; first, combat itself, the direct physical interaction of two character; second, the subtext from which physical contact arises; finally, the stage itself, a matrix without which there is no action or subtext. The progression locates stage combat for us within the actor’s art. Combat is the climax of a relationship, a moment in which potential energy becomes kinetic; but without the relationship, and without the matrix that supports it, combat has no value. (It doesn’t matter how many cars they crash on *The Dukes of Hazzard*—it’s still boring.)

The illusion of palpable space is the ground of stage combat, as it is the ground of all acting. The actor’s job is not to feel deeply (who knows?), or to look “real” (who cares?), but to *keep the stage alive*.

In keeping the stage alive, an actor/combatant participates in illusion. The word “illusion” has had a bad press, but there is nothing cheap or mechanical about it. An illusion is a profound psychophysical experience. Illusions are the most real things in life. That is why actors act, and people pay to see them.

### PART II

Reprinted from *The Fight Master*, January 1984

The ensemble of actor/combatants is revealed in the matching of step to step, breath to breath. If I step forward you step back. We preserve between us an interval which we call *fighting distance*, which keeps us out of the reach of each other’s weapons. The space between us, however, is more than a safety measure.

Fighting distance is the space across which it is possible to project illusions of conflict.

Few spectators—including learned critics—understand that there are exact values to theatrical space. Common sense, of course, tells us that two people can be too far apart to fight. In a hockey game, after all, the referee ends a brawl by separating the brawlers. The Cowardly Lion serves as a reminder that aggressive postures played at too great a distance are ludicrous. But common sense does not tell us something else that is equally true, that people can be too close to fight. Surely, one thinks, the attacker will try to get within striking distance. What we forget is that no competent opponent will allow him to do so.

Pragmatically speaking, a stage fight at insufficient distance is dangerous to the combatants, because every blow can do damage if the parry is missed. But the casual spectator would be surprised to learn that loss of distance also destroys dramatic integrity. The psychological value of the combat comes from the intention of two characters to reach across space and harm each other. When the space no longer serves as an obstacle, combat movements lose their intensity. The fight looks faked. To understand why fighting distance makes sense, and when it should be broken, is to understand the proxemic structure of conflict.

#### *Proxemics: The Self Outside the Skin*

Edward T. Hall discovered that certain kinds of interpersonal and intercultural conflicts can be understood on the assumption that the skin is not the boundary of the personality. “If we can think of man as surrounded by a series of expanding and contracting fields which provide information of many kinds, we shall begin to see him in an entirely different light” (*The Hidden Dimension*, 1966, p. 109). Hall described the human variety of territoriality—the tendency of organisms to mark out areas of space/time as their own. *You can assault a person without touching him*. We project ourselves into a series of concentric fields outside the body. If I penetrate your “bubble” without your permission, you will take it as an invasion. “Get your hand *out of my face*,” you might say. You have been violated, even though I never touched you.

Hall’s name for the study of such “bubbles” is “Proxemics.” He distinguished four zones of informal interpersonal space (see *The Hidden Dimension*, pp. 147-148 for a matrix of these zones and their characteristics). *Intimate distance* is the zone within eighteen inches of the body surface. Within intimate distance, communication is primarily non-verbal, through extensive physical contact, smell, breath, and body heat. The voice is composed of sighs and whispers. Lovers and conspirators are often within intimate distance of each other. One and a half to four feet is the zone of *personal distance*, which signifies active, rational interest between people without physical intimacy. Friends, or colleagues working “closely” together, often observe personal spacing. *Social distance* lies between four and ten feet. At social distance, two people cannot touch each other. On the other hand, they must acknowledge each other. Trying to ignore a person at social distance is self defeating: the tension will grow until you *must* form a relationship. As you are first introduced to a person, you observe social distance. Many business or service transactions are also

carried on at social distance. Outside of ten feet, behavioral changes occur that are appropriate to public speaking or performance. This outermost proxemic zone is called *public distance*.

#### *The Proxemic Structure of Stage Conflict*

Actor/combatants also carry territories with them. The stages of conflict are marked by systematic penetrations of that territory. The *challenge* is usually given from opposite ends of the space. (The sheriff comes through the swinging doors of the saloon and calls to the bad man, who is drinking at the bar.) The combatants then move forward to do *reconnaissance*. In this phase they may stop and talk, or they may circle each other and, feinting to draw the other into a mistake. In due time the *fight* is joined; the fighting distance is somewhat closer than reconnaissance but slighting greater than the reach of the weapons. The *kill* demands a distance even closer than fighting distance, but the director, actor, and fight master must be very careful about penetrating this last spatial boundary. Kill distance signals either the end of the fight, or a failed attempt to end it. It is either a cadence or a deceptive cadence. To linger within kill distance endangers the combatants and stops the music of the scene. The phases of the conflict are not a matter of taste. They are intrinsic properties of theatrical space.

It seems that the phases of stage conflict should correspond to the proxemic zones of human behavior, but the two schemes are not directly comparable. In theatrical behaviors, the relationship between two persons is not a direct one, but exists through the mediation of a third party. The paradox of dramatic behavior is that signals of intimacy must be transmitted across public distance to the spectator. The actor must publicize, and thus distort, real patterns of communication into a code which has been called “public solitude.” The intimacy of the stage, perceived at thirty, fifty, or a hundred feet, is not the same behavior as actual intimacy, which can only occur within a few inches of a person, and other proxemic zones must be adjusted for the stage accordingly.

#### *The Shape of the Scene*

Diana Lee and I have constructed, on the basis of observations in our studio, a scheme of dramatic, proxemics that explains the phases of stage combat as a special case of action between characters. As two actors enter from opposite ends of the stage, one senses the possibility of contact. If they approach each other, there is a distance at which that contact will be activated. One may call this the “buzz” point, because actors who stand at this distance will feel a growing tension: it is as if there was some sort of issue outstanding between them, though neither they nor the spectator can say what that issue is. The actors can nurture that tension with timely approaches and retreats, by circling movements, counters and mirrors, with well-chosen pauses and new impulses. If they approach too close, however, the tension will be broken. It is as if the unstated issue between them is resolved. One may call this the “stop” point, because by proceeding beyond it, the actor induces a cadence. “Stop” distance, like “buzz” distance, depends on the scale of the action, but in the case of an action played across the length of a sizable stage, we find it to be five or six feet—that is, outside the distance at which actors can touch each other.



The area outside the “buzz” point may be called a *zone of potential*, signifying the possibility of contact. Between and including the “buzz” and “stop” points is the *zone of influence*, where a scene between two parties is “built” toward its climax. Within the “stop” distance is the *zone of closure*, where the potential of the scene is discharged. Premature closure is disappointing, and loitering within the zone of closure halts the rhythm of the performance. Inexperienced actors try to stay within arm’s reach of each other, mistaking proximity for intensity. Combat training helps them to learn that energy arises from playing against the obstacle of intervening distance.

#### *Real, Theatrical, and Stage Combat Space*

The actor projects himself across the public interval between himself and the spectator. The spectator, in turn, regulates the performance by transmitting behavioral signals back across the gap to the actor. *Actors affect each other through a third person who is far away.* Theatrical intimacy is therefore larger than actual intimacy: it is signified by the zone of closure. The theatrical sign of personal space is the zone of influence. The zone of potential,

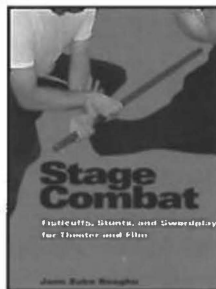
where actors are not yet bound in conflict, represents social distance. Since all communication in the theatre is publicized, there is no meaningful category of public distance on this progression.

The phases of the stage conflict can now be written within a general scheme of proxemics. The challenge comes at the distant end of the zone of potential. Reconnaissance occurs at or around “buzz” point. The fight oscillates around the inner range of the zone of influence. Only at the moment of a kill or a near-kill can the combatants move past “stop” point into the zone of closure, which in the special case of combat is measured by the length of the weapons.

The sense of the various envelopes that enclose an actor, and the knowledge of when to penetrate them, are two of the stage’s most fundamental skills. An artist ignores the structure of theatrical space at his own risk. Stage combat training clarifies the spatial values of the theatre by making that risk physical.



## *The Pen and the Sword*



### **Stage Combat: Fisticuffs, Stunts, and Swordplay for Theater and Film**

#### **New Book Has Its Gems**

by Brandon Burk

*Stage Combat: Fisticuffs, Stunts, and Swordplay for Theater and Film* by Jenn Zuko Boughn is an exciting new publication from Allworth Press in 2006 that puts a bit of an eastern twist on top of some old, sound values. The book has its own ideas and vocabulary that may be inconsistent with those of the SAFD, but overall makes for a useful companion to the classroom or workshop, particularly for young actors.

This is a very easy read, and the author’s experience working with younger people shines through. There is also a heavy martial arts influence here, using words like *Taihenjutsu* to categorize falls, rolls, jumps and so forth. While eastern martial arts are still not hugely popular in the majority of plays being done around the country these days, the disciplines’ inevitable merging with stage combat has become increasingly popular in workshop training. Fight Masters like Chuck Coyl and Michael Chin teach classes entirely on the subject, which, in my experience, many students find fresh and fascinating.

It does seem that, in an effort to make the book concise and affordable, the text may be a little vague at times. Boughn talks about

the importance of *realism*, but does not offer many suggestions on what that is or how to attain it. There are also some explanations of techniques that border on dangerous. In explaining how to do a “John Wayne straight punch” she advises, “Make sure the victim really *snaps* (italics mine) his head with the reaction, as this adds to realism,” though she does not say anything about safety precautions with the neck. However, were the book used as a companion to professional supervised training, this should not be a huge issue.

The SAFD reader may find the book to be a little inconsistent with other books written by SAFD members when it comes to terms and approach. For instance, her definition for “moulinet” is “the circling of the rapier *behind the head* (italics mine) to switch parrying sides;” and there is a strong recommendation for always working barefoot. But if you can get past the differences, the book contains a lot of unique and fun information, that you might not find in books by Lane, Hobbs, or Suddeth. There is a section on Katana technique, and a brief opinionated section about “Wire Fu” on stage.

Boughn does not bog the reader down with too many technical terms or a lot of history and the beginning of the book offers a slew of wonderful theatre games to play in the classroom or workshop, emphasizing values like status, awareness, distancing, and ensemble. Most of these games are a little childish, and there is nothing here we have not seen before, but all are fundamentally sound, and fun for the young at heart.

*Stage Combat* offers some valuable tools for the beginner, and a unique, fresh approach for the advanced combatant. There are definitely a handful of gems here.



Jenn Zuko Boughn is an adjunct professor of English and Theater at Metro State College of Denver. She has performed with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival, the award-winning Trouble Clef Theatre, and Frequent Flyers Aerial Dance Company. She has taught gymnastics and martial arts, and gives frequent seminars on stage combat. She lives in Boulder, Colorado.

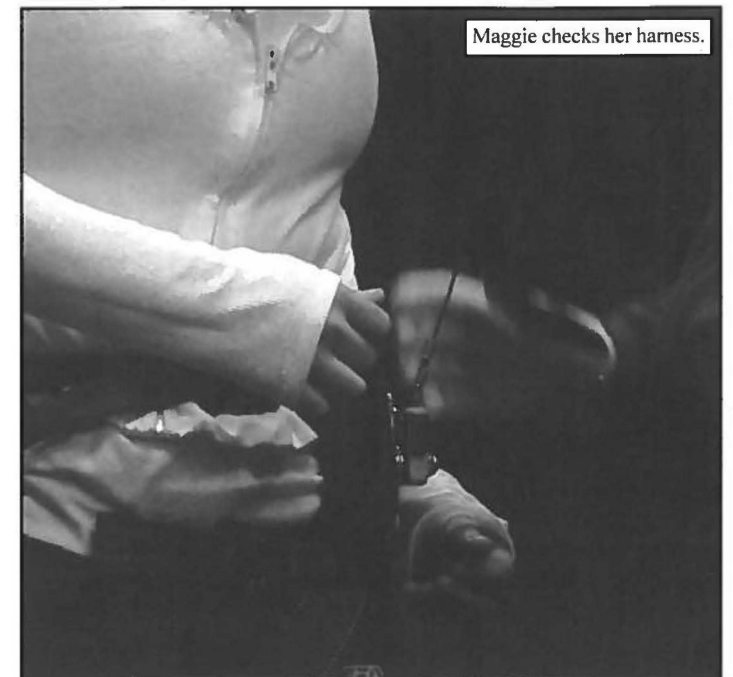
# FIGHTING AND FLYING

by Lee Soroko

Professional fight director k. Jenny Jones and ZFX Flying Effects held the nation’s first of its kind workshop, exploring the unique connection between visceral stage violence and mechanized flight in one and two point harness systems. This workshop, held at the ZFX headquarters (a warehouse in Louisville, Kentucky referred to as “the Dojo”), included twenty actors who were highly skilled physical performers with advanced expertise in stage combat. Jones, the only recognized female Fight Master by the Society of American Fight Directors, and ZFX, one of the top flying companies in the world with Broadway credits that include *Wicked*, *Lestat*, and Martin Short’s *Fame Becomes Me*, pushed the boundaries of violence by taking stage combat to the air for the world of the theatre.

The question posed by Jones in this workshop was the evolutionary nature of stage combat abutted to the technology and the illusion of flight offered by ZFX and its competitors. Given the sophistication of the audience, how do we as performers continue to adapt and fill the demands made of us by the audience? In the comfort of our living rooms watching reruns of the *Matrix*, we can get swept away in the gravity defying fights and flight of Neo. But, can such heart pounding storytelling aids work in the theatre where budgets are tight, cut away shots nonexistent and fully staffed rig crews are the stuff of pixie magic and fairy dust? This workshop was posed to explore such considerations as well as the lofty thoughts of the “future of stage combat as a story telling aid.”

When posed with this question directly regarding the future of stage combat, Jones stated, “The Air. We have to be able to fly and take advantage of what this technology offers. I think as soon

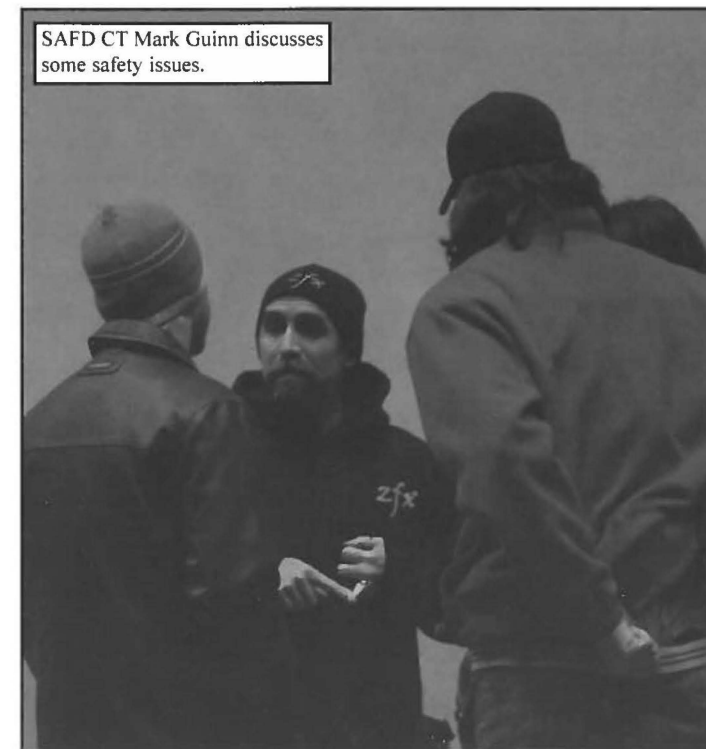


Maggie checks her harness.

as I saw Chinese Martial films becoming accepted in Hollywood, thank you Jacki Chan, I knew stage actor combatants would need to fly. One of the reasons I was recognized last year as a Fight Master is that my techniques and choreography are rather cinematic in style and this approach has redefined how unarmed stage combat is being done on theatre stages across the country.”

Jones’ direction of taking fights in flight has found a synergetic companion in Robert Dean, founder of ZFX. What Dean and his lead arial choreographer and instructor Jason Whicker do incredibly well is teach people to fly. They have mastered the paradigm of math and geometry to give the illusion of flight. With inventions such as the Nicopress gauge, crimps, pulleys and other *deus ex machina* standards, the actor can move vertically and horizontally. What Dean and his employees offer is the training and equipment (shipped worldwide) to put the actor into the air, and they do this with considerable élan. Although experts in putting the actor into the air, Dean and his team are not expert in the art of stage violence and this is where fight master k. Jenny Jones and her group of twenty advanced actor-combatants and certified teachers take the stage.

Given the primary need of any director is that his or her actors can act. Actor-combatants must have the ability and skill-set to give the illusion of high stakes violence with or without weaponry and can do so without injury nine shows a week. Stage combat training most often begins in conservatory or college in order to improve a young actor’s understanding of the craft of performance in clear objective orientated training. Once bitten with this particular bug, such training for these performers connects to their understanding of acting in a direct fashion. They, in turn, seek out further training in this discipline, and as a result, these actors

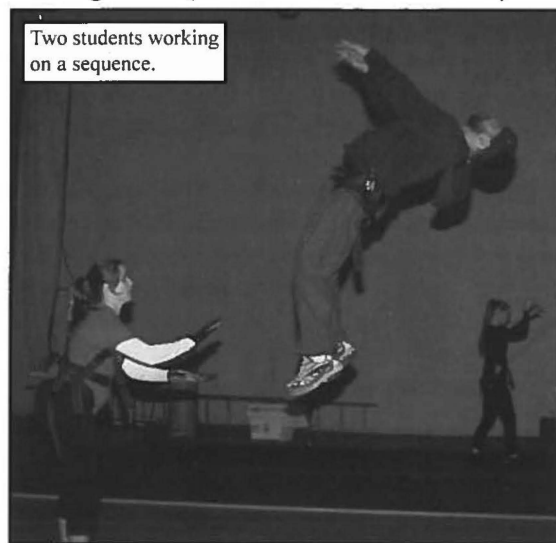


SAFD CT Mark Guinn discusses some safety issues.



develop a high level of kinesthetic awareness, and advanced disciplined stage combat skills. It is important to note that these skills have little to do with real violence and are much more akin to dance than a real fight. Like dancers, these types of actors know how to move and can specifically manipulate their body to give the illusion of violence. What they do not know how to do is fly.

Day one of the two-day workshop consisted of eight hours of basic flight instruction by Jason Whicker. Whicker has been with ZFX for three years and has logged countless hours in a harness teaching actors (and rock and roll musicians) how to fly. What



Two students working on a sequence.

becomes immediately apparent is that a symbiotic relationship exists between the person seen to be flying by the audience and the two other people responsible for the vertical and

horizontal movement of the person flying. By use of a pulley system the weight of the flyer can be adjusted from a 1 to 1 ratio (heavy lifting), 1 to 2, and so on. The slightest pressure on a line by a rope operator is felt by the person in flight or merely on ground, tethered to the line and connected to a one or two point of contact harness system. Human rope operators can also be removed for high budget expansive venues with mechanical and computerized operator systems. With this set up the computer will always run the same routine and flight pattern, but the actors may not. Given the level of trust needed for success, all involved in this process learn to adapt to the people at the end of the rope, so that a pattern is established and repeatable.

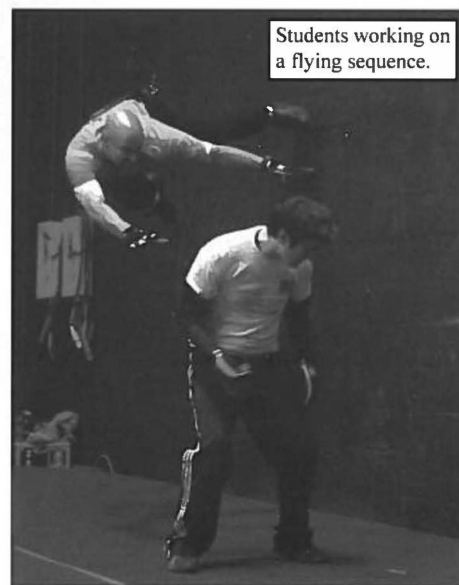
The rope operators have the complete safety of the person flying in their hands. Careful attention to the flying actor is needed at all times by the operator due to the possibility of injury. Whicker relied on his long time business partner, Isaac Faust to get him into the air and work on the mathematical line rigging calculations to get this workshop off the ground. Faust, a former ZFX employee began his own company, Stage Flight Development, which focuses solely on flight training and does not rent the equipment needed to put on performances with flight. Faust's aim is to train flyers and operators so that they gain the most out of the flight systems employed by ZFX and their competitors when employed as actors.

What connects the flyer or actor to the rope is the harness. The harness is worn across the chest and between the loins, with the spinning metal connection points located directly on the sciatic nerves for the two-point harness and in the center of the back for

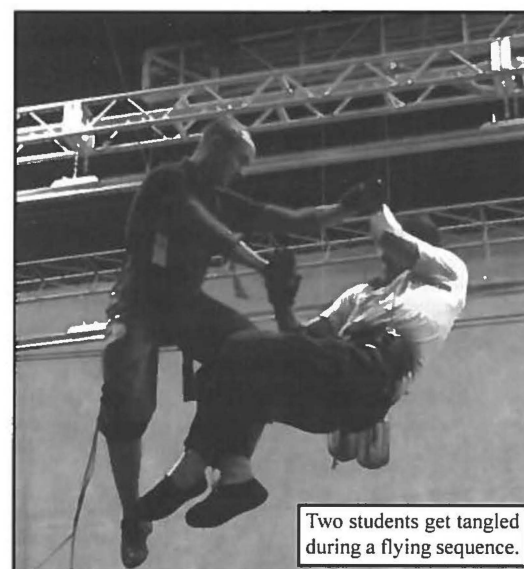
a one point on connection harness. Both devices are to be worn as tight as possible and according to the Whicker and Faust, "within a tolerable level of pain." Whicker demonstrates that movement in flight is completely an illusion, and the performative skill of the actor sells the audience on the emotional quality of effort. Real effort in flight (actually jumping) distorts the mathematics calculated by Faust (expert rigger). When you really jump, the rope operator on the other end of the line is thrown off balance and may take flight. To demonstrate this idea, Whicker, pushed off the ground into the air and launched his rope operator Faust twelve feet high. The only real thing that the actor in flight can do in a two-point harness is turn clockwise or counter clockwise. Like swimming in the air, the leg travels behind you and rotates in the socket in a small circular motion. Given that the loins are girdled in a tolerable level of pain from the harness, this poses some level of difficulty for some participants. Flight is often counter intuitive. The back is arched when doing front flips and the arms are brought into the center of body when doing back flips. The mantra is do less because everything is done for you.

Basic flight training under the tutelage of Faust and Whicker consisted of experimentation of four flight stations in the ZFX "Dojo" in eight hours. Station one consisted of the one and two harness systems. The one point of contact in the midst of the back is most often seen in *Peter Pan*. With a constant pull, the back is misaligned and the head-neck relationship is somewhat askew. Flipping, turning, bounding, leaping and jumping skills with operator communication and fluidity was addressed. Station two was a bungee rope attachment variation with a two-point harness system. Participants in this area learned how to land a fifteen foot vertical jump, as well as perch upon a high structure with ease. The adventurous attacked completing front flips over the structure or variations of this flip onto, off, and over the ten foot vertical jump. Station three was a linear track flying apparatus, which makes one feel like Superman or a world class gymnast. Station four was a personal favorite, wall running. Wall running is very *Crouching Tiger* and with a two-point harness connected at only one point (left or right hip), the illusion is that you were walking or running on the walls at whatever height you and your operator decided upon. Not only is one operator responsible for your vertical lift and safety, a second operator controls your rate of horizontal movement. As the actor, your job is only to appear to be running. The timing is often split second with the result, a beautiful movement across the wall of a high warehouse.

The second day of this workshop put the recognized fight direction skills of Jones and the abili-



Students working on a flying sequence.

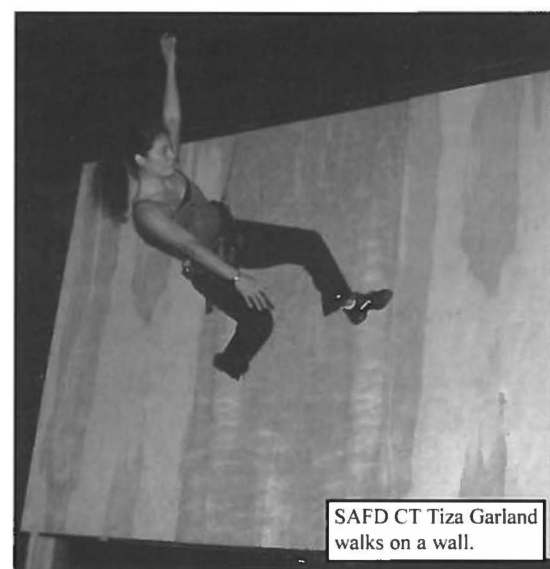


Two students get tangled during a flying sequence.

tions were linked as a safe place to support the artistic vision and fight choreography. Without the need to worry about gravity, the participants could break the vertical access points regularly seen in proscenium staged conflicts. These limitations were illuminated and the participants entered into a combat arena akin to the world of super heroes. Granted, the flight training merely scratched the surface of possibilities, but the level of combat skill was immense and the realization was clearly made evident that these two performance mediums directly supported each other.

ties of her stage combat trained participants to the test. On this day of training, the actor-combatants, attempted to wed what they do well (the illusion of violence) with the rudimentary flying learned the previous day. The workshop sta-

According to Jones, her "ultimate intention in pairing stage combat with flying was to see how big the need was for research. I wanted to see if the performing of stage combat in the air was something presently



SAFD CT Tiza Garland walks on a wall.

viable, or will it take some time in development. Stage combat is inherently dangerous, as is flying. The mix together has been working for years in the film industry, but the demands for the stage performer are greater than the film performer in that the stage performer must safely and effectively repeatedly perform the act." If stage combat is to maintain a level of continued connection to the demands of our audience, the next step as purveyors of staged violence is to take to the air. The future may indeed be, fighting and flying. ♦♦♦

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# PUT TO THE TEST

## Results of the SAFD's Skills Proficiency Tests

Date	Location
Instructor	Adjudicator
Person Tested	Weapons Proficiency
RD Rapier & Dagger	UA Unarmed
QS Quarterstaff	SS Smallsword
BS Broadsword	S&S Sword & Shield
KN Knife	SIS Single Sword
Renewal	Renewal of Actor/Combatant Status
EAE	Examiner's Award for Excellence

### October 2003

October 24	Baltimore Shakespeare Festival
Lewis Shaw	Chuck Coyl
Tara Garwood	R&D UA KN
Maynard Edwards	R&D UA KN
Alex Zavistovich	R&D UA KN
Joanna Higbee	KN
Owen Schmitt	KN

### May 2004

October 27	Baltimore Shakespeare Festival
Lewis Shaw	Chuck Coyl
Tom Powers	R&D UA BS
Colby Coddling	R&D UA BS
Marianna Vogt	R&D UA BS
Joey Ibanez	R&D UA BS
Owen Schmidt	R&D UA BS
Joanna Higbee	R&D UA BS
Liz Williams	R&D UA BS
Ian Humphrey	R&D UA BS
David Lettlen	R&D UA BS

### Video

Lewis Shaw	Michael Chin
Scott Kerns	R&D S&S KN
Craig Lawrence	R&D S&S KN

### December 2004

December 1	Baltimore Shakespeare Festival
Lewis Shaw	Chuck Coyl
Bill Leiman	R&D BS QS KN
Liz Williams	R&D BS QS KN
Shannon Parks	UA BS KN
Gillian Porter	UA BS KN
Wayne Willinger	UA BS
John Towensen	R&D UA BS
Tatsuya Aoyagi	QS KN
Christopher Niebling	R&D UA-EAE BS
Valerie Fenton	R&D UA-EAE BS
Charles Drexler	QS KN

### August 2005

August 20	Fights4-Summer Sling
Michael Johnson/Ray Rodriguez	Michael Chin
Denise Hurd	
Benjamin Curns	KN
Barbara Seifert	R&D BS KN
Nicole Godino	BS KN
Andrew Smereck	BS KN
Galway McCullough	R&D BS
Michael McGuire	R&D BS
Michael Yahn	R&D-EAE BS
Barbara Brandt	KN
Casey Kaleba	KN

### December 2006

December 14	Columbia College-Chicago
Richard Raether	David Woolley
T.C. (Timothy) Anderson	S&S KN

Christina Bernacchi	S&S
Jay Burckhardt	S&S KN
Anna Epstein	S&S
Kim Fukawa	R&D SS S&S KN-EAE
Matt Johnston	S&S KN
David Kaplan	S&S KN
Jon Kurtycz	S&S KN
Molly Plunk	S&S KN
Jacob Owens	S&S KN
Chad Olson	S&S KN
Cynthia Trail	S&S KN

### May 2007

May 6	Indiana University of Pennsylvania
Michael Hood	Michael Chin
Sarah Fritz	R&D UA BS
Laura Krouch	R&D UA BS
Rachel Nelson	R&D UA BS

### September 2007

September 22	Comrades at Arms
Geoffrey Alm	Drew Fracher
Lee Ann Hittenberger	R&D
Richard Lewis	R&D
Heidi Wolf	R&D

### October 2007

October 23	Renewal
Ted deChatelet	J. David Brimmer
Chris Duval	R&D UA BS
Juan LeBron	R&D UA BS
Rene Millan	R&D UA BS
Kjerstine Anderson	R&D UA-EAE BS

### October 27

Lacy Altwine	AMDA-LA
Carrie Huneycutt	Drew Fracher
Liz Bassford	BS
Kyle Buckland	BS
Pedro Mendoza	BS
Kassidy Serbus	BS
Paul Romero	BS
Alexandra Oliver	BS
Steph Baca	BS
TJ Marchbank	BS
Evan Scott	BS
Jeff Lewis	BS
Robert Goodwin	BS

### October 27

Payson Burt	AMDA-LA
James Byous	Drew Fracher
Cynthia Johnson	R&D UA
Pedro Mendoza	UA
Nicholas Nealon	UA

### October 27

Robert Hamilton	AMDA-LA
Todd Spradling	Drew Fracher
Brett Nichols	R&D UA
Lance Shigematsu	R&D UA
Lea Belanger	R&D UA
Christina Gudjenova	R&D UA
Eden Malyn	R&D
Chantelle Christensen	R&D
Kassidy Serbus	R&D
Kyle Buckland	R&D

### October 27

Mike Mahaffey	AMDA-LA
Geoff Brabham	Drew Fracher

Tyler Grant	R&D UA
Caleb Hunt	R&D UA
Ryan Mercado	R&D UA
Samantha Sergeant	R&D UA
Matthew Hawthorne	R&D UA

### October 27

Baltimore Shakespeare Festival	Chuck Coyl
Lewis Shaw	
Kara Warr	UA
Courtney Krimmel	UA
Ben Gansky	UA
Benjamin Korman	UA
Morgan Lowenstein	UA
Rebecca LaChance	UA
Brian Harris	R&D KN
Owen Schmidt	R&D KN
Cindy Martin	SIS UA KN
Christopher Niebling	SIS UA KN
Christopher DiGregorio	UA KN
Valerie Fenton	SIS UA KN

### November 2007

November 4	Off Square Theatre Company
Michael Johnson	Michael Chin
Andrew Munz	R&D-EAE
Kelly Bouma	R&D
Lynne Oppen	R&D
Patrick Nolan	R&D
Caryn Flanagan	R&D
Woody Taft	R&D
Kevin Asselin	R&D
James Reilly	R&D-EAE

### November 28

Robert "Tink" Tuftee	Fights4
Corey Robert Brandeis Pierno	Michael Chin
Barbara Seifert	S&S
Carter Farmer	S&S
James Hutchison	S&S
Dayle Towarnicki	S&S
Malcolm Young	S&S
Lisa Kopitsky	S&S
Turner Smith	BS-EAE S&S
John Robichau	BS S&S

### November 29

J. David Brimmer	New York University
Kevin Little	Michael Chin
John Boonin	UA
Drew Longo	UA
Kat Pogo	UA
Nick Kocher	BS
Alex Anfanger	BS
Keith Schneider	BS
Grace Folsom	BS
Jonathan Hinman	BS
Peter Coleman	BS
Cale Krise	BS

### December 2007

December 2	Bay State Fencers
Adam Mclean	Michael Chin
Wendy Kinal	SIS
Jeffrey Knoedler	SIS
Matthew Martino	SIS
Julie Constantino	SIS
Tim Abrahamsen	SIS
Chris Campbell-Orrock	SIS

### December 7

Michael Chin	Muhlenberg College
	J. Allen Suddeth

Dana Bielecki	KN
Michael Brown	KN
John Esslinger	KN
Anthony Franqui	KN
Michael Kite	KN
Jill Kurzner	KN
Alexander Lotorto	KN
James Ludlum	KN
Scott Rodrigue	KN
William Schmidt	KN
J. Eric Stephenson	KN
Alana Torres	KN

### December 8

Alabama Shakespeare Festival	Chuck Coyl
Jason Armit	R&D UA BS
Graham Allen	R&D UA BS
Cory Coleman	R&D UA BS
Lauren Martin	R&D UA BS
Matt Renskers	R&D UA BS
Chris Roe	R&D UA BS
Gregory Spradlin	R&D UA BS
Patrick Vest	R&D UA BS
Jarrold Yuskas	R&D UA BS

### December 8

Grand Valley State University	k. Jenny Jones
Ian Borden	UA KN
Evin Anderson	UA KN
Randy Brown II	UA KN
Ryan Brown	UA KN
Erin Courtney	UA KN
Charles Fortenbacher	UA KN
Ben Green	UA KN
Michael Harthen	UA KN
Joshua King	UA KN
Michael McCarty	UA KN
Nancee Moes	UA KN
Katrina Niemisto	UA KN
Ben Sparks	UA KN
Danielle Steinbacher	UA KN
Maria Tejada	UA KN
Sara Vazquez	UA KN

### December 8

Western Illinois University	Richard Raether
DC Wright/Brian LeTraunik	BS S&S
Carl Lindberg	BS S&S
Drew Kopas	BS S&S
Jamie McCoy	BS S&S
Nick Schell	BS S&S
Steve Svec	BS S&S
Zack Meyer	BS S&S
Joshua Murphy	BS S&S
Colin Wasmund	BS S&S
Lily Blouin	BS S&S
Sara Paulak	BS S&S
Glen Wall	BS S&S

### December 8

Frostburg State University	Michael Chin
Darrell Rushton	UA
Mark Bowling	UA
Sean Jeffries	UA
Jessica Bishop	UA
Steve Custer	UA
Ian Hoch	UA
Tom Cutler	UA
Shannon Huber	UA
ErinRose Sincevich	UA
Joshua Scurry	UA

### December 9

Hanover College/Riverrun Theatre	Drew Fracher
Jim Stark	R&D KN
Jon Becraft	UA KN
Ben Cassidy	KN
Emily Lozon	R&D UA KN
Marietta Macy	R&D UA
Anna Mantz	R&D UA
Melanie Kibbler	UA KN
Jake Miller	R&D KN
Chris Neal	UA KN
Ben Paciorkowski	R&D UA KN
Whitney Shouse	UA

David Springer	KN
Jing-Wen Ye	UA KN
Erin Chandler	R&D UA

### December 10

Michigan State University	Chuck Coyl
Christina Traister	UA
Paul Bourne	UA
Liz Chase	UA
Kate Compton	UA
Jaclyn Hofmann	UA
Joel King	UA
Vinnie Mascola	UA
Hazen Natzmer	UA
Diana Obradovich	UA
Daryl Thompson	UA
Dave Wendelberger	UA
Amy Winchell	UA
Alex Zikakis	UA

### December 10

Florida State University	Brian Byrnes
Robert Ek	UA-EAE
Jake Brown	UA
Shirley DeSear	UA-EAE
Joe Heil	UA
Jeffery Hylden	UA
Eliza Kiss	UA
Nadine MacKey	UA
BJ Oswalt	UA
Alicia Phillips	UA
Jeffrey Phillips	UA
Allison Piehl	UA
Rachel Smoker	UA
Michael Stablein	UA
Jeff Stephenson	UA
Kate Taszozsch	UA
Theresa Turner	UA
Sushana Watkis	UA

### December 10

University of Michigan	Chuck Coyl
Erik Fredricksen	R&D UA QS
Dylan Saunders	R&D UA QS
Maggie Ferguson-Wagstaff	R&D UA QS
Meredith Stepien	R&D UA QS
Kate Garfield	R&D UA QS
Liam White	R&D UA QS
Sarah Ashley	R&D UA QS
Nico Ager	R&D UA QS
Lee Chrisman	R&D UA QS
Hailey Agnew	R&D UA QS
Jackie Laurian	R&D UA QS
Seth Moore	R&D UA QS
Brittany Connors	R&D UA QS
Jessica Maynard	R&D UA QS
Kaylin Tovalacci	R&D UA QS
Darren Criss	R&D UA QS
Adam Moscal	R&D UA QS
Julia Albain	R&D UA QS
Lauren Lopez	R&D UA QS
Joe Moses	R&D UA QS
Joe Walker	R&D UA QS

### December 11

Illinois State University	Richard Raether
Paul Dennhardt	UA
Chris Ciesla	UA
Ryan Hallahan	UA
Celeste Burns	UA
Steve Wisegarver	UA
Conor Burke	UA
Alex Potanos	UA
Melinda Ryba	UA
Keith Habersberger	UA
Nathan Martin	UA
Justin Stewart	UA
Nick Cardiff	UA
Shannon Reilly	UA
Gabriel Sweet	UA
T.J. Velazquez	UA
Nick Demeris	UA

December 11	KN
Robert Westley	UA KN
Kelly Wadler	R&D UA

Michigan State University	Chuck Coyl
Charles Rohlfis	UA
Kyle Cheng	UA
Lily Goodman	UA
Richie Pepio	UA
Lea Heller	UA
Louis Aquiler	UA
Alexis Rhiannon	UA
Patrick Marran	UA
Casey Killoran	UA
Elena Offerman	UA
Rachel Pearl	UA
Jillian Sorgini	UA
Travis Youssef	UA

### December 12

Columba College-Chicago	Chuck Coyl
John McFarland	R&D UA BS
Catherine Wiitanen	R&D UA BS
Jacob Carlson	R&D UA BS
Ryan Bourque	R&D UA BS
Josh Ballard	R&D UA BS
Matt Steffan	R&D UA BS
Samantha McDonald	R&D UA BS
Alex Hand	R&D UA BS
Behzad Dabu	R&D UA BS
Anne-Marie Sears	R&D UA BS
Vanessa Jaundoo	R&D UA BS
Jon Kurtycz	R&D UA BS
Matthew Davis	R&D BS

### December 12

College of DuPage	Richard Raether
John Tovar	UA
Craig Deering	UA
Ben Hooper	UA
Nicole Klix	UA
David Moreno	UA
Nicholas Ritchie	UA
Nathan Sanders	UA
Jessica Storoe	UA
Andrew Trygstad	UA

### December 12

Northwestern State University	Michael Chin
Michael Johnson	SIS UA-EAE All
R. B. Marie	SIS UA
Mandi Ridgell	SIS
Ryan Reynolds	SIS
Jennifer Collins	SIS
Robert Johnson	SIS UA-EAE All
Ashley Crockett	UA
Kathryn Springman	UA
Travis Fontenot	UA
Courtney Murphy	SIS UA
Brian Foster	SIS
Gwen Mahan	UA
Elizabeth Bigger	SIS
Jessi Miller	UA
Kyle Accord	SIS UA-EAE
Nicholas Frederick	SIS
Rebecca Russell	SIS UA
Ryan Hazelbaker	UA
J. Casey Barrett	SIS UA
Regan McLellan	UA
Melissa Ralph	UA
Monique Ayme	UA
Senay Jackson	UA

### December 13

Elgin Community College	Richard Raether
Stephen Gray/John Tovar	UA
Brian Cherry	UA
Zac Graves	UA
Sean Jaster	UA
Patrick Linder	UA
Jessica Pedersen	UA
Tony Pellegrino	UA
Alissa Pienkowski	UA
Rachael Roberts	UA
Sandra Rodney	UA
Dylan Urban	UA





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treasurer@safd.org



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(310) 904-0109  
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**Certified Teacher Representative**  
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Los Angeles, CA  
(818) 438-8342  
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### REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

**New England**  
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C: (352) 208-2449  
seregrep@safd.org

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**JIM STARK**  
Hanover, IN  
(812) 866-7262  
glregrep@safd.org

**Southwest**  
**ANN CANDLER HARLAN**  
Houston, TX  
(713) 952-4867  
swregrep@safd.org

**Mid America**  
**MIKE SPECK**  
Winona, MN  
maregprep@safd.org

**Rocky Mountain**  
**JEFF BULL**  
Westminster, CO  
(303) 521-4363  
rmregrep@safd.org

**Northwest**  
**HEIDI WOLF**  
Seattle, WA  
(206) 548-9653  
nwregrep@safd.org

**Pacific Western**  
**ROBERT HAMILTON**  
Glendale, CA  
pwregprep@safd.org

**Foreign**  
**BRET YOUNT**  
London UK  
44-020-8881-1536  
internationalregrep@safd.org

## COLLEGE OF FIGHT MASTERS

**Fight Master Emeritus**  
**DAVID BOUSHEY**  
Everett, WA  
(425) 290-9973  
BUSHMAN4@prodigy.net

**Fight Master Emeritus**  
**J.D. MARTINEZ**  
Lexington, VA  
H: (540) 463-3756  
W: (540) 463-8005  
martinezjd@wlu.edu

**GEOFFREY ALM**  
Seattle, WA  
H: (206) 365-3870  
C: (206) 920-1047  
gbald@juno.com

**J. DAVID BRIMMER**  
Yardley, PA  
(347) 512-3932  
j davidbrimmer@aol.com

## FIGHT DIRECTORS

**JASON ARMIT**  
Atlanta, GA  
(404) 964-1957  
armit@stagecombat.com  
www.stagecombat.com

**JOHN BELLOMO**  
Philadelphia, PA  
H: (215) 334-1814  
C: (215) 262-1591  
jvbellomo@verizon.net

**PAYSON BURT**  
North Hollywood, CA  
H: (818) 997-3356  
C: (818) 694-5550  
Payson@4lafa.org  
www.4lafa.org

**DAN CARTER**  
State College, PA  
H: (814) 867-1803  
W: (814) 865-7586  
dhc4@psu.edu

**JAMIE CHEATHAM**  
Pewaukee, WI  
(262) 595-2522  
swordman@wi.rr.com  
jamie.cheatham@uwp.edu

**CHARLES CONWELL**  
Chester Springs, PA  
H: (610) 827-7707  
W: (215) 717-6454  
charlesconwell@verizon.net

**PAUL DENNHARDT**  
Stanford, IL  
(309) 392-2300  
chefprd@aol.com  
prdennh@ilstu.edu

**BRIAN BYRNES**  
Houston, TX  
(713) 743-1788  
BByrnes@UH.edu

**MICHAEL G. CHIN**  
New York, NY  
(212) 807-1004  
nscwboss@aol.com

**CHUCK COYL**  
Chicago, IL  
(773) 764-3825  
chuckcoyl@prodigy.net

**DREW FRACHER**  
Highland Heights, KY  
(859) 760-6230  
vern10th@fuse.net

**ERIK FREDRICKSEN**  
Ann Arbor, MI  
H: (313) 944-0116  
W: (734) 647-6231  
hannis@umich.edu

**DEXTER FIDLER**  
San Francisco, CA  
(415) 810-3476  
dexfid@yahoo.com

**BRENT GIBBS**  
Tucson, AZ  
H: (520) 622-2143  
W: (520) 621-9402  
BrentG@U.Arizona.edu

**MICHAEL JEROME JOHNSON**  
New York, NY  
(202) 258-1177  
mj2rd@yahoo.com

**JEFF A.R. JONES**  
Raleigh, NC  
H: (919) 325-2842  
C: (919) 539-7476  
jarjones@nc.rr.com

**COLLEEN KELLY**  
Staunton, VA  
(540) 885-4078  
colleen@americanshakespearecenter.com

**GEOFFREY KENT**  
Denver, CO  
(303) 877-2670  
geoffrey@thefightguy.com  
www.thefightguy.com

**RICHARD LANE**  
San Francisco, CA  
(415) 957-3622  
ricl@pacbell.com

**BRUCE LECURE**  
Miami, FL  
C: (305) 903-9250  
W: (305) 284-5683  
Blecur@aol.com  
Blecur@miami.edu

**DALE ANTHONY GIRARD**  
Kernersville, NC  
(336) 993-3255  
FightGuy@earthlink.net  
dgirard@NCARTS.edu

**k. JENNY JONES**  
Cincinnati, OH  
kj\_jones@msn.com

**DAVID LEONG**  
Richmond, VA  
W: (804) 828-1514  
Service: (212) 382-3535  
dsleong@vcu.edu

**RICHARD RAETHER**  
Rockford, IL  
(815) 962-6579  
rraether@mac.com  
www.rraether.com

**ROBERT MACDOUGALL**  
Seattle, WA  
(206) 522-2201  
clandrmdacd@aol.com  
rmacdougall7@hotmail.com

**SCOT MANN**  
Macon, GA  
(478) 742-7305  
scotmann@stagecombat.com  
www.stagecombat.com

**JOHN MCFARLAND**  
Brookfield, IL  
(708) 955-8767  
mcfarland.john@sbcglobal.net

**DR. ROBIN MCFARQUHAR**  
Urbana, IL  
H: (217) 337-0099  
W: (217) 333-1659  
rmcfarqu@uiuc.edu

**TIM PINNOW**  
Las Cruces, NM  
H: (505) 647-2667  
W: (217) 333-1659  
Tpinnow@NMSU.edu

**RON PIRETTI**  
New York, NY  
H: (212) 675-4688  
C: (917) 385-9750  
ron.piretti@gmail.com

**RICKI G. RAVITTS**  
New York, NY  
SAFD Hotline (800) 659-6579  
(212) 874-7408  
rickifights@yahoo.com

**RICHARD RYAN**  
C: +44 7973-195887 UK  
C: (310) 904-0109 US  
richard@stagefight.com  
www.stagefight.com

**J. ALLEN SUDDETH**  
Glen Ridge, NJ  
H: (973) 748-5697  
C: (973) 223-5056  
nyfgtdirctr@aol.com

**DAVID WOOLLEY**  
Chicago, IL  
C: (312) 560-5448  
W: (312) 344-6123  
guido@theswordsmen.com  
dwoolley@colum.edu  
www.theswordsmen.com

**IAN ROSE**  
Philadelphia, PA  
(215) 468-8008  
Rosei@arcadia.edu

**NICOLAS SANDYS**  
Chicago, IL  
(773) 274-0581  
Voice: (773) 398-3034  
npullin@depaul.edu

**CHRISTINA TRAISTER**  
Eaton Rapids, MI  
(310) 213-2558  
traimez@aol.com

**JOSEPH TRAVERS**  
New York, NY  
(212) 726 2400  
swordplay98@hotmail.com

**ROBERT "TINK" TUFTEE**  
Brooklyn, NY  
(718) 788-4957  
Tink@fights4.com  
www.fights4.com

**STEVEN VAUGHAN**  
Alexander, NY  
(716) 474-1160  
svsv55@yahoo.com

**ROBERT WESTLEY**  
Hempstead, NY  
(617) 620-5057  
dpwestley@yahoo.com

**JACK YOUNG**  
Allentown, PA  
(610) 336-4805  
jackyoung59@hotmail.com

## CERTIFIED TEACHERS

**LACY ALTWINE**  
North Hollywood, CA  
(818) 749-8394  
lacy\_altwine@hotmail.com

**AARON ANDERSON**  
Richmond, VA  
(804) 683-3483  
adanderson@vcu.edu

**LERALDO ANZALDUA**  
Houston, TX  
(281) 732-4708  
leraldo\_a@hotmail.com

**TIM BELL**  
Orlando, FL  
(954) 401-3445  
stuntbell@earthlink.net

**JACKI BLAKENEY**  
Chapel Hill, NC  
(404) 408-2221  
jacki@stagecombat.com  
www.stagecombat.com

**ANGELA BONACASA**  
Castine, ME  
(207) 326-4381  
goodhouse@hotmail.com

**IAN BORDEN**  
Hudsonville, MI  
(616) 331-8076  
bordeni@gvsu.edu

**BOB BORWICK**  
Seattle, WA  
(206) 683-2267  
bobbyborwick@yahoo.com

**JAMES N. BROWN**  
Wyomissing, PA  
(267) 258-2341  
JNBrown12153@aol.com

**H. RUSS BROWN**  
Stevens Point, WI  
(715) 346-3664  
rbrown@uwsp.edu

**NICOLE CALLENDAR**  
West Orange, NJ  
(201) 679-3175  
calendorn@comcast.net

**JOHN CASHMAN**  
Clermont, FL  
(352) 394-8522  
johncashman@cfl.rr.com

**GINA CERIMELE-MECHLEY**  
Cincinnati, OH  
(513) 200-5866  
swordlady@sprintmail.com

**JONATHAN COLE**  
Salem, OR  
(503) 999-4709  
jon@revengearts.com  
www.revengearts.com

**BRUCE CROMER**  
Yellow Springs, OH  
(937) 775-2430  
bruce.cromer@wright.edu  
www.brucecromer.com/BruceCromerHomePage.html

**TED DECHATELET**  
McMinnville, OR  
(503) 560-0636  
ted@revengearts.com  
www.revengearts.com

**ROBERT RADKOFF EK**  
Tallahassee, FL  
(850) 645-1956  
rek@fsu.edu

**MATTHEW E. ELLIS**  
Norman, OK  
(405) 325-6053  
mellis@ou.edu

**AL FOOTE III**  
New York, NY  
(917) 710-1226  
alfoote3@gmail.com

**TIZA GARLAND**  
Gainesville, FL  
(407) 256-9215  
TizaGI@aol.com

**DR. STEPHEN GRAY**  
Geneva, IL  
(847) 214-7472  
sgray@Elgin.edu

**MARK "RAT" GUINN**  
Ruston, LA  
(318) 614-1636  
mdg.ct@mac.com

**ROBERT HAMILTON**  
Glendale, CA  
(310) 367-7396  
frtv@charter.net

**ANDREW HAYES**  
Greencastle, IN  
(765) 658-4596  
amhayes@depauw.edu

**MICHAEL HOOD**  
Indiana, PA  
(724) 357-2282  
mhood@iup.edu

**SPENCER HUMM**  
Burke, VA  
(703) 626-8572  
slashm@aol.com

**ROBB HUNTER**  
Fairfax, VA  
(917) 604-3008  
robhunter@preferredarms.com  
www.preferredarms.com

**DENISE ALESSANDRIA HURD**  
New York, NY  
(212) 243-4867  
DAHurd2000@aol.com

**DR. MICHAEL KIRKLAND**  
Chesapeake, VA  
(757) 226-4730  
michhil@regent.edu

**MICHELLE LADD**  
Los Angeles, CA  
(818) 438-8342  
HRHmladd@aol.com

**BILL LENGFELDER**  
Rockwall, TX  
(972) 771-4677  
lengfeld@mail.smu.edu

**BRIAN LETRAUNIK**  
Macomb, IL  
(773) 805-0926  
brian.letraunik@gmail.com

**GREGG C. LLOYD**  
Newport News, VA  
(757) 594-8793  
glloyd@cnu.edu

**TODD LOWETH**  
Altadena, CA  
(626) 616-8795  
toddloweth@mac.com

**MIKE MAHAFFEY**  
North Hollywood, CA  
(818) 749-8393  
mike\_mahaffey@hotmail.com

**NEIL MASSEY**  
Brookfield, IL  
(708) 485-2089  
neil@roguesteel.com

**JILL MATARELLI-CARLSON**  
Greenville, NC  
(252) 412-7887  
carlsonj@ecu.edu

**ADAM MCLEAN**  
Boston, MA  
(804) 938-2222  
mcleanab@hotmail.com

**DOUGLAS MUMAW**  
Harrisonburg, VA  
(888) 930-6672  
drumumaw@eudoramil.com

**MARTIN NOYES**  
Irvine, CA  
(949) 400-4816  
bignoyes@hotmail.com

**DAN O'DRISCOLL**  
New York, NY  
(646) 228-6878  
Dan35051@aol.com

**MARK OLSEN**  
New York, NY  
(646) 548-9871  
Meo1005@aol.com

**DONALD PRESTON**  
St. Paul, MN  
(651) 645-2093  
theyfight@yahoo.com

**GREG RAMSEY**  
Hershey, PA  
(717) 448-5911  
kendogreg@aol.com

**RAY A. RODRIGUEZ**  
Far Rockaway, NY  
(646) 373-8106  
ranthrod66@yahoo.com

**DARRELL RUSHTON**  
Frostburg, MD  
(301) 687-4487  
dsrushton@frostburg.edu  
www.frostburg.edu/dept/theatre/index.htm

**JOHN PAUL SCHEIDLER**  
Staunton, VA  
(646) 337-7124  
jpdoe@earthlink.net

**EDWARD "TED" SHARON**  
Fredonia, NY  
(716) 673-3597  
tlsharon@hotmail.com

**LEWIS SHAW**  
Baltimore, MD  
(410) 321-6519  
LonnieSC@aol.com

**HARRIS SMITH**  
Lincoln, NE  
(402) 489-6977  
hsmith2@unl.edu

**LEE SOROKO**  
Miami, FL  
(305) 284-9206  
lsoroko@miami.edu

**K.C. STAGE**  
New York, NY  
(859) 492-8215  
kcstage@hotmail.com

**JIM STARK**  
Hanover, IN  
(812) 866-7262  
stark@hanover.edu

**PAUL STEGER**  
Lincoln, NE  
(402) 304-3541  
pstege2@unl.edu

**JEFF "ISH" THOMASON**  
Seattle, WA  
(509) 539-0905  
jeff.thomason@hotmail.com

**JOHN TOVAR**  
St. Charles, IL  
(630) 330-4293  
john\_tovar@sbcglobal.net

**BRAD WALLER**  
Springfield, VA  
(703) 861-3307  
GlobeFG@aol.com

**ROBERT WALSH**  
West Newton, MA  
(617) 244-9656  
robertwalsh@rcn.com

**D.C. WRIGHT**  
Macomb, IL  
(309) 333-3438  
DC-Wright@wiu.edu

**MIKE YAHN**  
New York, NY  
(832) 928-7577  
yahn.mike@gmail.com  
www.mikeyahn.com

**BRET YOUNT**  
London UK  
44-020-8881-1536  
swordsman@compuserve.com

# THE FIGHT MASTER

is a publication of

## The Society of American Fight Directors



The Society of American Fight Directors is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting safety and fostering excellence in the art of directing stage combat/theatrical violence. The SAFD is committed to providing the highest level of service to the field through initiating and maintaining guidelines for standards of quality, providing education and training, promoting scholarly research, and encouraging communication and collaboration throughout the entertainment industry.

The SAFD recognizes members at a variety of levels, including Fight Master, Fight Director, Certified Teacher, Advanced Actor/Combatant, Actor/Combatant and Friend. SAFD members have staged or acted in countless numbers of fight scenes for live theatre, film, and television.

Through its training programs across the United States, the SAFD has schooled thousands of individuals in the necessary skills to perform or choreograph safe and effective stage combat.

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One need not be a stage fighter, teacher, or choreographer to join and be active in the SAFD. Any individual who has an interest in the stage combative arts who wants to keep abreast of the field and receive all the benefits of memberships may join as a friend.	Any individual who has passed an SAFD Skills Proficiency Test and is current in Unarmed, Rapier & Dagger (or Single Sword), and another discipline. The SAFD considers Actor/Combatants to be proficient in performing staged combat safely and effectively.	Any individual who is current in six of eight SAFD disciplines, has had three years transpire since their first SPT test, and has been a dues paying member in good standing for two years. The SAFD acknowledges Advanced Actor/Combatants as highly skilled performers of staged fighting.
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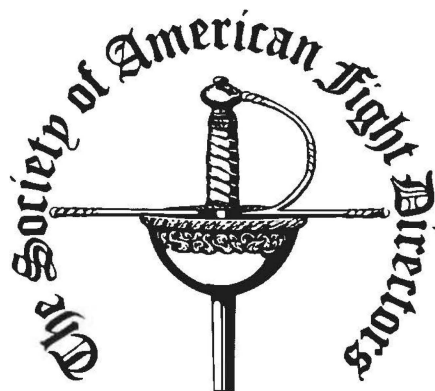
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# Society of American Fight Directors

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

Actor/Combatant ♦ Teacher ♦ Fight Director

However, one need not take any sort of test to become a member of the SAFD. Anyone interested in the art of fight choreography and stage fighting can join. SAFD members receive a 10% discount on SAFD workshops; *The Fight Master*, a journal published twice yearly; and *The Cutting Edge*, a newsletter published six times yearly with news updates on SAFD activities, policies, and members.

To apply for membership in the SAFD, fill out the form below and send to:

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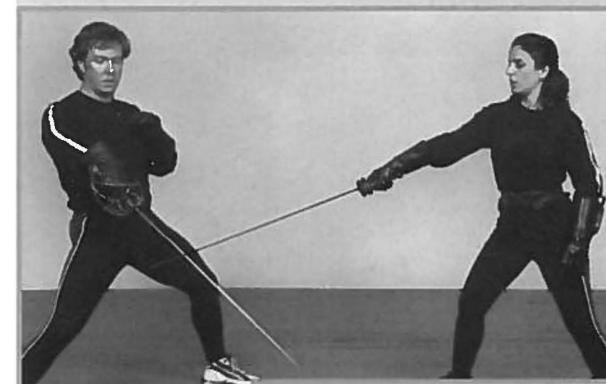


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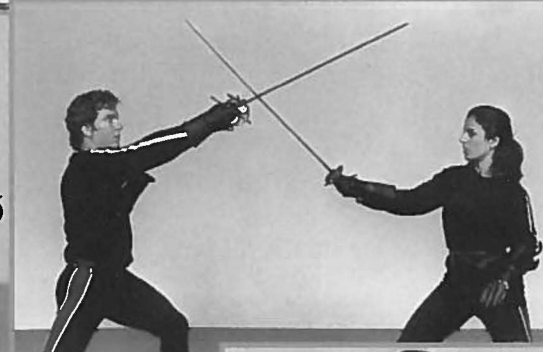


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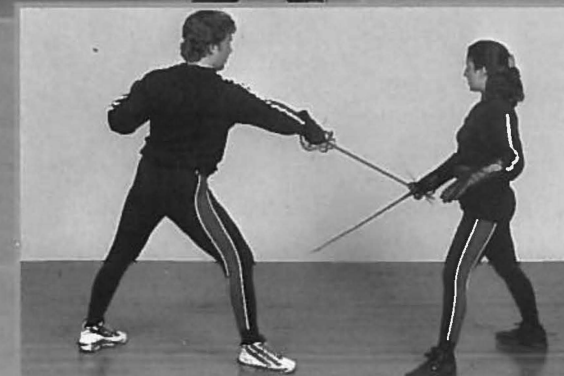
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