Fall 2013

The Fight Master, Fall 2013, Vol. 35 Issue 2

The Society of American Fight Directors

The FightMaster

Fall 2013 The Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

THE WORLD STAGE COMBAT CERTIFICATION CONFERENCE

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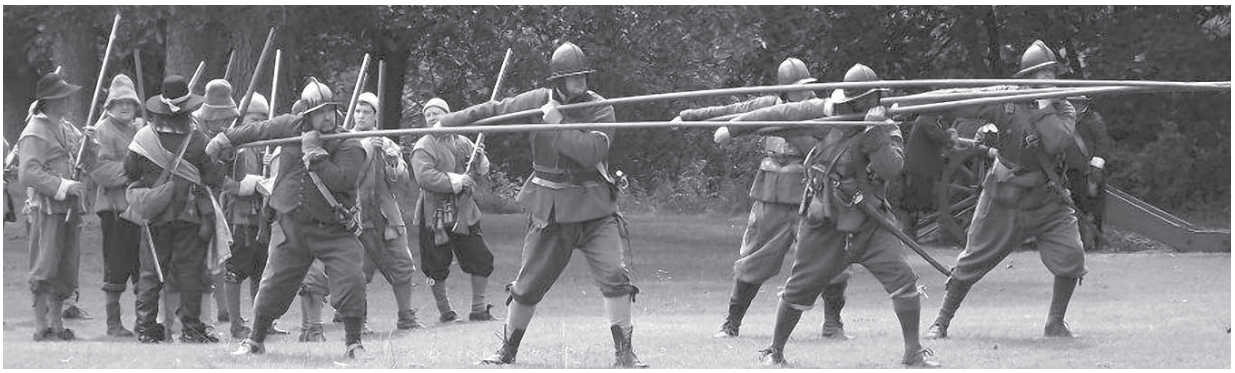
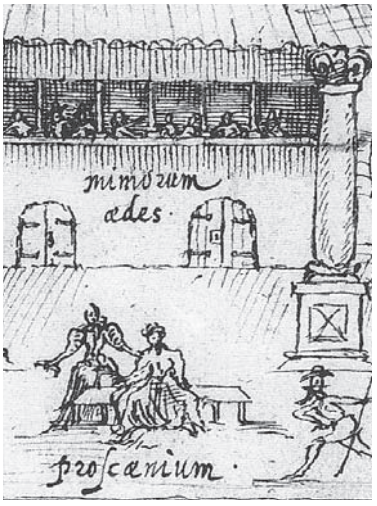


Features



Standards

Editorially Speaking

Great strides are underway for the future of *The Fight Master* and I'm pleased to announce that the SAFD Governing Body has cast their support toward establishing a web presence for the publication, which will include increasing readership through non-SAFD member subscriptions and the long awaited, greatly anticipated digital archive. While establishing a stronger professional foundation for the publication has taken longer than I anticipated, the efforts have enabled our forward planning for the publication to take place.

Forecasting release deadlines for the planned advances is not realistic, since, as most of you are aware, this is a small publication that largely depends on the time availability of a small, but dedicated group of staff and volunteers. I hold high hopes that the process will move quickly; however, when viewed through a historical lens, advances of such structural magnitude often require a greater time than anticipated.

In the mean time, we are actively pursuing options toward enhancing the diversity of our content, increasing/focusing contribution solicitation and updating/developing more opportunities for advertising within the pages of the publication. As you will see with this issue, we are continuing to encourage exploration into various facets of stage violence, providing different perspectives, methodologies and approaches toward the implementation of this unique art form.

Additionally, we are attempting to hone the content into thematic issues to distinctly address two large categories of stage violence, education and professional application. Given that higher education searches are strongest in the fall, the current issue has taken education and training as our first attempt toward focusing the content. The response to a more specific solicitation garnered fantastic results, which is encouraging as we head into our solicitation for the Spring 2014 issue. The spring issue's focus will be more on fight direction and the application and integration of stage violence in the professional theatre and film communities. With two annual issues addressing specific areas of stage violence, our hope is to provide more refined parameters from which contributors can direct their efforts.

Providing opportunity for contributors to narrow their focus and enhance perspective on specific areas of study also contributes toward strengthening the advertising benefits for the publication. By increasing the focus on specific areas of study, we hope to reach more readers specializing within each area, thus offering advertisers greater value with the readership's focused attention on particular issues.

Lastly, and perhaps most important, we have been using the past few issues to determine a more manageable and efficient timeline for the publication's production. Our goal is to provide more reliable delivery of the publication to readers as well as supply advertisers with clear and consistent release dates for better marketing efforts. Each issue supplies valuable information toward our goal and we are continuing to hone the production timeline, with fewer changes being made every issue. Once more consistency has been established; we will provide concrete information regarding our timeline. Ideally, this will coincide with the release of the new website.

Thank you for your patience with our evolving process. Often, the nuts and bolts that go into producing quality work go unnoticed, but I think it is important to keep you updated on what goes into making this publication. I also value your feedback, both on what we have done as well as our plans toward the future. There is much to do, but with your continued support, our efforts to enhance and expand this publication to meet the needs of the growing global stage combat community will continue to succeed. I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Best wishes,

Michael Mueller

Michael Mueller, Editor
fmeditor@safd.org

The Fight Master

Published bi-annually

SUBMISSION GUIDELINES

Editorial and graphic content featured in *The Fight Master* is the product of contributions from SAFD members of all levels as well as from the global stage combat community. Participation is greatly encouraged and submissions are accepted on a rolling basis, with deadlines for the Fall and Spring editions occurring on June 1 and December 1 respectively. For submissions by traditional mail, please send a shipping address request by email.

Articles

Submitted material will be edited for clarity and length with the assistance and approval of the author. Articles should include a short biography 150 words or less, as well as contact information. By submitting material to *The Fight Master,* it is assumed the author agrees the following:

- All submissions are subject to editorial discretion
- All work submitted is assumed to be the original work of the author, and *The Fight Master* will not assume any of the author's copyright liabilities and publication rights.
- Submissions must include any and all necessary supporting documentation (bibliographies, etc.)
- Before publication, author must approve all changes beyond grammar and conventions
- Submissions must be written in a clear and professional manner
- No submissions defaming individuals by name will be published
- Authors are assumed to be working toward the betterment of the SAFD and, thus, will not be paid for submissions

Please forward submissions and questions to:
Michael Mueller, Editor
fmeditor@safd.org

Graphics

Both digital and traditional photographs are accepted; however, resolution will play a factor in where, or if an image is used. All photos should be accompanied by the names of the performers w/ roles (if fewer than five are pictured), photographer, play, playwright, fight director, theatre company, and year of performance. Without this information, we can not give proper credit to the contributors and the picture will not be used.

Traditional images/negatives submitted by mail should be sent in an envelope clearly labeled "Photos—Do Not Bend," with larger photos secured between cardboard or foam core. Submissions should also include a return self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Digital images must be submitted in an uncompressed format (RAW, TIFF, PNG or TGA) on a CD or DVD if possible. Images that have been reduced in size to send by email will also be considered as long as a larger version exists that can be requested later. Please do NOT crop or alter photos. Touch-ups and color correction will be performed as needed.

Please forward submissions and questions to:
Jonathan Wieder, Art Director
fmartdirector@safd.org

Contributors

Keith Farrell is a senior instructor with the Academy of Historical Arts. He holds a 3rd Dan black belt in Shoto Budo karate and spent several years with the Swords of Dalriada, a historical battle re-enactment society, performing and choreographing show fights and public demonstrations. http://www.historical-academy.co.uk

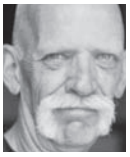
Paul Gelineau was granted membership to the Fight Directors Canada College of Fight Masters in 2004. He currently serves as the Director of the Academy for Fight Directors Canada, and lives near Vancouver, British Columbia where he teaches and directs.

Meron Langsner has composed violence and/or movement for over 150 productions, films, and tours in venues ranging from LORT theatres to educational institutions. He is also an award-winning playwright, educator, and theatre & performance scholar.

Richard Nunn is a casual actor from Birmingham, UK. He holds an Advanced Level European Certificate of Skilled Performance Combat qualification through Stagefight and has been a member of the Fairfax Battalia of the English Civil War Society on and off since 1990.

Alison Sky Richards is an author who specializes in fantasy adventure stories for both adults and young adults. Her next novella, *A Fine Line: Herrick's Tale,* is due to be released in the summer of 2013 as an ebook through Amazon. She is also a long time member of the Writer's Workshop track at DragonCon in Atlanta, GA.

Steven Schwall has been a practicing Historic European martial artist since 1974, participating in fully armored tournaments with companies like the Company of St. George. He joined the SAFD in 2006, and has been seen as a regular student and teacher at the Winter Wonderland Workshop, the Eureka Stage Combat Workshop, Carnage in the Corn, and the Lincoln Assassination.



J. Allen Suddeth is a Broadway veteran of eleven shows including Disney's *Newsies,* over 150 Off-Broadway shows, and hundreds of Regional Theater productions. He has staged action for over 750 television shows, and has taught at Juilliard, Rutgers, SUNY Purchase, and Strasberg.

Joseph Travers has been teaching stage combat and creating fights, stunts and action sequences for stage and screen for twenty-five years. He heads the stage combat program at the AMDA, NYC and teaches stage combat to MFA acting students at Columbia University. Since 1995, he has been the managing director of Swordplay, NYC's longest running stage combat school. He is certified as a fight director and teacher by the SAFD and Fight Directors, Canada.

On The Cover

Whether she's making weapons and armour for Hollywood blockbusters, acting and stunt fighting on the silver screen, or winning full-contact Historical European Martial Arts tournaments, **Samantha Swords** makes the art of conflict her specialty. A detailed interview with Samantha will appear in a future issue of *The Fight Master*. Photo by Rey Alabastro Photography

Acting the Fall

ADDING PHYSICAL NARRATIVE TO GETTING TO THE GROUND

By Meron Langsner

It doesn't take a whole lot of thought to realize why falls are both important (actors can hurt themselves on the way down to the ground in myriad ways) and often overlooked. Falls are a surprisingly high-risk activity under any circumstance, in part because performers may not realize that they are at risk, but also because of the required repetition and a strong potential for a performer to add intensity, and therefore unnecessary energy, making the act of falling even more dangerous.

Before going further I must restate that the most important element of a stage fall is the actor repeatedly getting to the ground (or bed, or couch, or wherever) safely. There are all manner of techniques to do this, and all manner of things that can go wrong if an actor "just falls" (concussions, broken wrists, broken tailbones, etc.). I'm stating these seemingly obvious points early because they are all too often not obvious, and because safety is the first and ongoing concern of any fight director. Other written sources by fight directors far more advanced than myself detail the techniques of falling.[1] I will therefore forego the technical demands in this article and focus on examining elements of storytelling and physical dramaturgy in falls, as well as describe an exercise I developed to help performers become aware of narrative elements that can be added to a fall.

Assuming that safety is ensured through proper technique, if a character falls, there is of course a reason behind the action. Those reasons will vary for each actor, character and production; but, acting is (among other things) a visual art, and in fight choreography, stories are told through movement.

One thing that I repeatedly find myself telling younger actors is that the speed at which their body is capable of executing certain techniques may in fact be far faster than is appropriate for the scene. I use the sport of fencing as an example. As much as I love it personally, it is far too fast and too subtle to be a popular spectator sport. The untrained eye simply cannot follow the action. Likewise, a reasonably fit performer moving as fast as they can may not only be going faster than is safe, but may also be denying the audience part of the story they are trying to experience. Once the technique of falling safely has been assimilated, adding character to the fall can be addressed.

There is an exercise in the Stanislavski system of actor training wherein student actors walk "as if" certain conditions exist and/or they have certain objectives. (A classic example is "walk as if determined to annoy your downstairs neighbors.") In my Spring 2011 Stage Combat course at Tufts University, I started experimenting extensively with what I have come to call the "fall as if" exercise. I spent a lot of time early in the semester on falling drills, and I realized than once the mechanics of the technique were understood, it was not a large leap to start introducing character situations. One of these exercises was coming through a door as if violently expelled from the other side, which let an audience in on a character's circumstances immediately upon seeing them. Other exercises were isolating a particular body part as if it had been shot and then falling, various states and types of intoxication, fainting, and of course, the imaginary banana peel. Falls could be to the front, back, just to the knees, rolls (front or back), and/or any combination of these. They could be comic, dramatic, or absurdist, so long as they were safe and had a clear narrative. I found that these same exercises could be introduced fairly early on in short workshops as well, and that they were useful in keeping younger actors from the impulse to speed up prematurely.

We then focused on scenes in which the fall continued the story of a character being struck (perhaps by a weapon). Someone who was just hit by a baseball bat falls differently than someone who was shot with a tranquilizer dart, punched, flipped or kicked (and a kick to the head is a different physical narrative than a kick to the groin). In these cases both the narrative of the successful attack landing and that of its result need to be clear (and SAFE).

The "fall as if" exercise can be introduced as soon as the basic elements of getting to the ground are assimilated by a group, and can be expanded quite broadly. I started adding it to group warm-ups almost as soon as I developed it, and continually added more scenarios.

Another element to add is scenery. How an actor uses set pieces plays into the narrative of how their character gets to the ground. Techniques that begin the classroom can then be applied in the rehearsal hall, and finally, in performance. I recently consulted for a production in which a character was supposed to have a heart attack in a scene during which they had a long monologue. They did not simply fall to the ground, but used set pieces and other actors while simulating various visible symptoms to allow the physical narrative to unfold. This allowed the actor (an older gentleman) to increase his margin of safety on the way to the ground while giving himself increased opportunity to illustrate his character's journey.

Another opportunity for me to further these concepts in the context of a rehearsal process was in a high school production of *Almost, Maine*.[2] The play includes a scene called "They Fall," in which two inebriated characters fall in love, and literally continue falling down throughout the scene. Each admission of affection is followed by a fall. The writing is both comic and touching, but it presents very specific challenges to the performers and choreographer.

The scene required a dramatic build to the ways in which the characters fell and got back up (or partially fell, or partially recovered, or fell and rolled, or rolled to a standing position and then took a spill) that supported the text of the play, kept the actors safe, and could be consistently repeated every performance. Those of you who are familiar with the play might recall that the characters are ice-fishing in this scene, which gives them some situational context for the falls which supports the metaphorical actions. As the performers worked through the text, they found moments when the emotional content of a line would physically unbalance their characters. As the falls where narrative devices, it was easy to clarify to the actors why they needed to happen at a speed that the audience could follow. It also allowed for the scale of the falls to build from a loss of balance and recovery up to mild acrobatics.

Falls are often a key part of physical narratives. They need to be studied so that they are safe and dramatically effective. They're too often overlooked, and they're an area where actors have a great opportunity to make powerful comedic or dramatic choices.

Endnotes

1 *Combat Mime: A Non-Violent Approach to Stage Violence* by J.D. Martinez is an excellent technical manual and one of the standard texts on unarmed combat that I strongly recommend for anyone pursuing the study of physical performance.

2 It is important to acknowledge that this high school understood the need for a specialist to help with this scene, even though it was "just falling." I did not count the amount of falls in the scene, but there were many, and that I had a great time working with these students.

The Reactor Game

An Exercise for Developing Specific and Dynamic Reactions

By Joseph Travers, SAFD CT/FD

Background

As far as I know, I invented the "Reactor Game" around 1995. There may be other games like it that others have invented, but I am not aware of them. It was originally used as a fun activity to wrap up school workshops because it got each student to work toward creating specific, clear reactions in front of the whole class. All the students were engaged in the game, and students could participate with minimal stage combat training.

Over time, I began to see more potential in the game and started experimenting with it as a part of my regular stage combat classes (especially while teaching basic unarmed). The game provided an excellent opportunity for students to refine their use of what I'm calling "the tools of reaction." While the game works best placed somewhere after these tools have been taught, I have also used a "before and after" approach, introducing the game before covering reactions and then returning to it after. Before describing the game, I'll give a quick overview of these "tools of reaction."

Tools of Reaction

There are lots of variables within each of the following "tools" that can be manipulated by the actor in different ways. Students should be encouraged to experiment with all of them over the course of game. There may even be other "tools" to discover.

Isolation—to draw focus and concentrate attention

Vocalization—to draw focus and indicate the type and degree of pain, as well as communicate non-verbal information about the aggressive action (using things like pitch, volume, rhythm, duration, etc.)

Size/Duration of Movement—indicating degree of force by how far a body part (or parts) moves and how long the movement goes on

Tempo of Movement—using speed/acceleration to suggest the force behind the action, as well as its nature

Eye Focus—using the eyes to suggest the nature of the action and the affected/targeted area

Hands—using the hands to clarify the story, including the natural tendency to grab or touch a painful/injured area

Recovery time—indicating degree of pain/damage

Preparation

Preparing for the game requires the creation of game cards in advance. I've tended to use 3x5 index cards, but any durable, easy-to-handle material on which you can write will do. Start with a fairly good-sized quantity; you'll need more cards than the number of students. On one side of each card write the following three pieces of information:

An aggressive action—I have tended to confine myself to actions that may appear in an unarmed fight (slap, punch, kick, elbow, knee, etc.), but you may choose to allow yourself more leeway.

A part of the body being acted upon—Potentially, any body part could be used.

The amount of force behind the action—This can be indicated by words (light, medium, hard) or by numbers, say on a scale of 1-10.

You can write or print the information in any format you wish (vertically, diagonally, or horizontally). I have found that following the order listed above tends to help participants. When you are done, you may have a horizontally laid out card that reads:

SLAP LEFT CHEEK MEDIUM

Or, if you prefer a vertical layout, one that reads:

PUNCH
STOMACH
7

A set of these cards (with a wide variety of different actions, body parts and amounts of force) is all the equipment you need for the game. Have fun creating interesting combinations. You may want to create a "basic" set of cards and a more "advanced" set.

Playing the game

As teacher, you will act as the game's moderator. The moderator's role is one of guidance and instruction for both the player and the audience. As the game progresses, it is helpful to periodically pause and ask questions like, "What made so many of you think it was the knee?" or, "What told you it was a light amount of force?" to keep the class focused on how proper use of the tools of reaction will make their performance clearer. Reinforcing this idea along the way can be a very effective approach.

Step 1: Shuffle the cards and offer the students an opportunity, one at a time, to become the player by coming up and selecting a card at random. The rest of the class will serve as the audience. Once the

player has read and understood the card, he or she should return it to you. Take care to keep that card out of the deck from this point forward to avoid repeat selection. (I have also found over time that it's more fun not to read the card myself, unless the player has a question about it.)

Step 2: The job of the student who has selected the card is now to recreate in front of the audience, as specifically as possible, the reaction to what the card describes. The player works alone, without another actor as aggressor, using the tools of reaction. The participant has three attempts to create the reaction, during which they can repeat the same version, or alter the performance to achieve more clarity. (I find many students forget that changing things is an option—remind them! They especially forget that changing the audience's viewing angle of the reaction can be useful.) The audience should refrain from shouting out guesses at this time. For the moment, they serve only as observers.

Special Note: For the audience, the exercise can sometimes decay into a "guessing game," existing solely for their fun and enjoyment. It can seem like the point of it all is simply to see who can guess first what the player is doing. The moderator must help to clarify that the primary role of the audience is to help each player to be as specific and accurate with their reactions as possible. To that end, all audience responses are valid—including, "I'm not sure" or "I don't know." The members of the audience should be encouraged to answer questions using their first impressions. They should be reminded to resist the temptation to figure things out or to let anyone else's response influence them. The player needs to know what each audience member experienced as a result of his or her efforts.

Step 3: When three attempts have been completed, the performance is finished. The player now waits in front of the audience while the moderator discovers what response the audience has had, using a series of questions about what they have seen. Getting accurate data about how much of the audience experienced what the player intended is crucial to refining his or her skill at reacting. The questions the moderator asks of the audience will help with this, and should be as follows:

"What part of the body is being affected?" Let's say a few people say, "Stomach!" A follow-up question should be, "How many of you saw stomach?" A show of hands will give the player an immediate view of how much of the audience saw what he or she intended.

"How much force was being used?"

"What was happening to him or her?" (or "What was the aggressive action?")

The questions should follow a similar form to that laid out for question one, allowing the player to see from a show of hands how many experienced the reaction as it was intended, and how many did not. (It should be noted that the last question is the hardest to answer without an aggressor onstage.)

When the questioning is over, and everyone has been polled, the player should be asked to read the card aloud to the audience. A round of applause should then be encouraged to acknowledge the player's efforts, completing his or her turn.

The Future

The "Reactor Game" has certainly developed and changed over the years. I share it with you now in the hope that it may be useful and fun for your classes. I hope it will continue to develop and grow as you use it!

Fight Directors Canada Hosts The World Certification Conference

Toronto, Canada | August 2–23, 2015

BY FM PAUL GELINEAU

One place. Five Associations. One Test. Fight Masters from all over the world are currently developing a unique certification training program which will, later this year, be presented to five governing bodies for professional sanction. The mission statement for this event is currently as follows.

> To create an academic and professional exchange by collaborating with various associations and developing a unique world certification program that incorporates the best practices from at least five international training bodies. Our goal is for the students to gain access to a world perspective on the Art of Dramatic Combat certification and its various approaches without having to travel the world to attain it.

"What are you thinking?" my wife asked.

"Wow, Really? That would be awesome!" my colleagues cheered.

And so it became.

In 1995, SAFD FM Richard Ryan hosted the first international certification event where Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD), Fight Directors Canada (FDC) and the very new British Academy of Stage and Screen Combat (BASSC) undertook a workshop where participants from all over the world could come and certify with all three associations in one event. As an eager combatant at the time, it was an opportunity and training experience that I loved and still remember fondly to this day. The international relationships that were forged during that event helped to evolve each organization's certification processes; but, most importantly, it created long term working partnerships and friendships that have lasted two decades.

So, as the most recent Director of the Academy for FDC, I thought, we should organize another multi-certification. It has been 20 years since the last one and will offer a great opportunity for organizations to contribute internationally as well as collaborate academically and professionally. While we are at it, I said to myself, why don't we increase the number of internationally recognized associations this time to five or so. . . How hard could it be? Which five associations should be included? After much consideration, the FDC College of Fight Masters decided that for this Conference invited associations needed to meet the following criteria:

Be recognized internationally by the other invited organizations
Have had a history of collaborating with FDC
Have demonstrated long-term support of other invited organizations academically, professionally and administratively
Have maintained an accessible policy and procedure for certification

That was 2011, and so I started on my journey in bliss. As with all things of this scale and involving organizations of this size, the process had to be developed and tackled in stages. The first step was the buy in.

Over a period of eight months, I made a lot of phone calls and wrote many emails to various senior members of our sister organizations to see what they thought of the idea. After many, many discussions and many, many preliminary questions, most loved the idea and agreed to support me in moving forward to approach their associations officially.

It is important to remember that back in 1994-96 most of our organizations were very young in developing policies and procedures for testing, and many were re-writing and often rethinking the best way to test, evaluate and structure training. Over the next fifteen years, each of these associations developed what they believed to be the best possible courses for students academically, physically and professionally. Fundamentally, different organizations maintain the same core and academic values, but imparting these values can sometimes vary greatly from association to association. And, as opposed to 20 years ago, we now have many more protectors of our holy grails (a.k.a. The Policies and Procedures).

The first academic question to come up about the Worlds 2015 was how to ensure that each association had their minimum requirements met so that a student could test. As you can imagine, if a student had to do everything "by the book" for each association, the Worlds Conference would have to be twelve weeks long, with 80% of it repetitive. So, to simply follow each course template or try to put them all together would not work. Therefore, our solution was to create a new academic template together as an international team, which would create a unique and eclectic training program while still addressing the core values and needs of each association. But what about weapons systems? How many hours of training per weapon? Who would teach? How would adjudication work? What about partnering, standardized levels of difficulty, number of moves per fight test, etc. etc. etc.? I needed to do some serious policy and procedure studying of the five associations who had met our criteria and accepted our invitation.

Four months later, and after another 300 email threads, it became clear to me (shortly after my eyes stopped bleeding) that in order for this event to succeed, the various associations would have to agree that this certification could not, and should not be like what any one association would get in a usual certification course. This event needed to be deemed a "special circumstance" to the normal certification process, a clause which each association involved recognizes.

My international team of collaborators believed strongly that the Worlds needed to be different, exciting and, most importantly, academically equivalent to the various levels accepted by all the collaborating associations. This criteria would give us the room to create something new, but still satisfy association testing standards. Luckily, all the associations understood the need to be flexible for this venture to succeed. Throughout the process thus far, appreciation of the multiple ways to proceed and our global willingness to collaborate and explore together has been invaluable.

During the IOSP's Paddy Crean Workshop of 2012 in Banff, (If you have not been to this event, you are crazy. GO!) most of the Worlds' association leaders or their representatives met and were able to start planning an approach and strategy to this conference. It became evident at that point that I was not only in for the ride of a lifetime, but that these men and women were some of the most passionate, caring and sharing people I have ever met.

In early 2013, the five Governing Bodies agreed to move ahead in exploring this conference possibility with FDC and to develop an approach to the Worlds. At that point the "Worlds Academic Committee" was born. This international body was made up of five Fight Masters from the five associations participating. The following is a list of the representatives from each association.

The British Academy of Dramatic Combat- Jonathan Howell
Fight Directors Canada – Paul Gelineau
The Nordic Stage Fight Society – Oula Kitt
The Society of American Fight Directors- Ian Rose
The Society of Australian Fight Directors –Scott Witt

These individuals were assigned because they all have a deep knowledge of their own associations' procedures and, more importantly, experience with collaborating and/or teaching for one or more of the other association systems. This knowledge will prove to be invaluable as we develop the courses. They have been assigned by their Governing Bodies to represent their association in developing the event academically while ensuring that the fundamental principles of training certification are followed and/or an equivalent is found.

Once we have created the courses, the Worlds Academic Committee will present the plans to the individual Governing Bodies. Doing so will allow the organizations to provide feedback on the programming created, enabling the committee to fine tune the offerings as necessary. This process will allow the associations to have specific programming to assess, and more importantly, to be able to decide if they can sanction the Conference Certification process.

Where are we now? At this point in the process, the makeup of the committee continues to evolve as more people get involved and the associations explore the concept. The Worlds Academic Committee will be meeting in London, England in late October of 2013, hosted by Tim Klotz of FDC and BADC. This will be the most critical stage of the Worlds process as the committee will (over three days) design the three course levels academically while playing devils' advocate for their associations' policies. There will be more on the design process and the outcomes of these levels in the next issue. Any graduate student or academic interested in documenting the process should get a hold of FM Gelineau at pgelineau@fdc.ca for more information.

Stay tuned. Our goal is for the Worlds be repeated every five years, with each association hosting in 2020, 2025, 2030 and 2035. FDC is starting in 2015 in place of our Nationals. Sharing hosting responsibilities will allow this event to truly be "the Worlds" and allow each association to benefit from offering this unique training opportunity and certification. Most people who have gained certification with these elite training bodies have had to travel the world and spend 10's of thousands to test for each. This will be an opportunity that not only allows participants international recognition with up to five associations, but also provides the opportunity to train with some of the world's best, developing professional and academic relationships that will once again create an important international dialogue informing the global future of our art form. For updates and how to register, visit www.fdc.ca.

Paradoxes *of* English Re-enactment *and* Stage Combat

BY RICHARD NUNN

Actor/combatants perform staged violence in a controlled environment. Boxers and fencers work within very specific, strict rules of engagement. The re-enactor, however, as an amateur enthusiast with a penchant for re-creating historical violence, fights in an unpredictable environment with various levels of training and little regulation on safety equipment or techniques employed. As an interdisciplinary participant in the worlds of acting, re-enacting and historical European martial arts (HEMA), I have always been interested in the possibility of bringing these worlds together.

I first became interested in stage combat through re-enacting English Civil War battles. At the tender and impressionable age of 17, I joined my local regiment, Colonel John Foxe's Regiment of Foote, who were a component of the Fairfax Battalia, Roundhead Army, of the English Civil War Society. Like most 17-year-old re-enactors, one of the first things I bought was a sword. Imagine my disappointment when I discovered that there was very little sword use on the battlefield. I was told that "it wasn't authentic" and that "soldiers hardly ever drew their swords." I was gutted by this horribly realistic revelation.

The next year, I discovered that there was a sword school in the English Civil War Society where we could use our swords on smaller events. Excited, I went along and learned some very basic sword fighting techniques, what are now known in the UK as "the fives," which are comprised of strikes to the upper leg, upper arm and head. Later, when I studied drama at university, I was encouraged to take the British Academy of Dramatic Combat (BADC) basic course, and for a while that was enough.

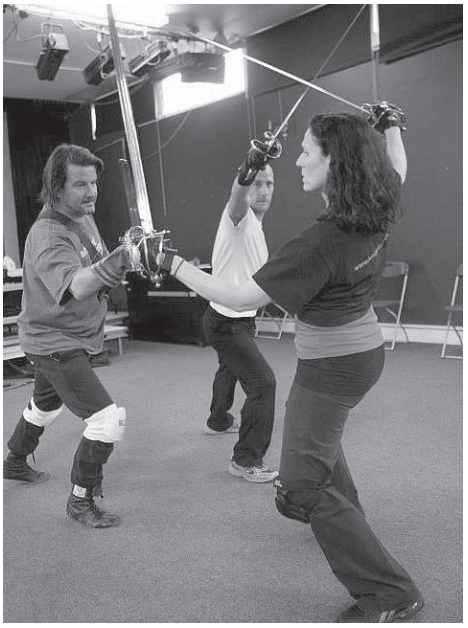
Years later, after pursing graduate study in drama and becoming involved with HEMA, as well as performing in university, amateur and professional productions, I discovered a new system of stage combat,

PHOTO BY RAPH ALDIS

On location of the short film *At All Costs.* Richard Nunn (left) attempts to sneakily steal the messenger's pouch (Ed Simkins) as his friend (David Broadwaters) engages him with sword versus twin dagger.

the European Certificate of Skilled Performance Combat (ECSPC). Their approach to stage combat was very different from my previous experiences because it was based upon original fight books from the 13th to 18th centuries, rather than as modified versions of modern sport fencing or kendo.

Stagefight, a stage combat school based in Birmingham, U.K., and specializing in the ECSPC system, taught performers to fight from the viewpoint of a martial art rather than purely performance. This was a revelation, as my biggest complaint against staged violence were the large discrepancies between the stage combat techniques that I was taught and the practical fighting techniques found in historical fight manuals. I appreciate that many stage combat techniques are applied for reasons of safety and reflect the legacies rooted in the modern sport fencing tradition, but with the advent of the Internet, it is now possible to access the historical fight manuals online rather than having to visit individual collections. The accessibility has arguably led to the development of HEMA, and because of the increased resources, stage combat arguably needs to further evolve by examining how to adapt historically correct methods of fighting. Excited by the prospect of adapting historical techniques to both stage and screen, I signed up with Stagefight's basic level course, and have since taken my intermediate level and advanced qualification.



This page, clockwise from top left: Richard Nunn (foreground) demonstrating George Silver's True Guardant as a parry to a high line inside thrust; Simon Frame (left), Colonel of the Fairfax Battalia and Ed Simkins (centre), Fairfax musketeer and Stagefight Basic student, fight Kaz Luckins, Satgefight Instructor; Richard Nunn (left) demonstrates a threat maintained low line parry against Fairfax battalia member Gareth Munroe; The Magnificent Seven: (left to right) Will Cotterill, Kaz Luckins (Stagefight instructor), Richard Nunn, Martin Hart, Adrian Fear, David Broadwaters, Ed Simkins, and Simon Frame. The first group of the Fairfax Battalia taught by Stagefight at Winterfold school, September 2012.

I had been out of re-enactment since 2004, but my renewed interest in Early Modern English Theatre and HEMA through Stagefight had re-ignited long dormant passions for the turbulent Civil War period of British history. So in June 2012, I reconnected with my old friends in the Fairfax Battalia. As is frequently the case with long lost friends, they asked me what I had been doing. When I mentioned stage combat training it was suggested that I share my new skills with the Battalia. So, on my comeback battle, I spent an afternoon teaching the safe use of bill and sword to a small group of re-enactors.

A kernel of an idea then formed: why not organize a training day with the professionals at Stagefight? To my knowledge, there had not been an official crossover between fight directors/instructors and re-enactors, although I certainly noticed similarities between the sword school at the English Civil War Society and the basic training offered by the BADC. Re-enactors could easily use a fight director's expertise. After all, what are battle re-enactments if not enormous staged fights?

There are many reasons underpinning why re-enactors can benefit from professional stage fight training. One of the biggest is a lack of intention with re-enactments. Re-enactors are not usually actors and do re-enactment for a hobby. They have given up their free time to travel across country, usually spending enormous amounts of money for no other reason than personal enjoyment, unlike a professional actor who is paid to perform, and therefore is paid to demonstrate a certain level of intention with their performance. I have attended many battles where supposed "enemies" are seen smiling and laughing at each other. Re-enactors are also enthusiasts rather than professionals and can be somewhat haphazardly trained with weapons. Training varies from society to society and regiment to regiment, but most re-enactors are rarely shown how to use a sword safely and realistically, which often causes many problems. A fight director, however, could channel a re-enactor's enthusiasm while providing effective techniques that allow for both safety and effective re-enacting of historical fighting techniques.

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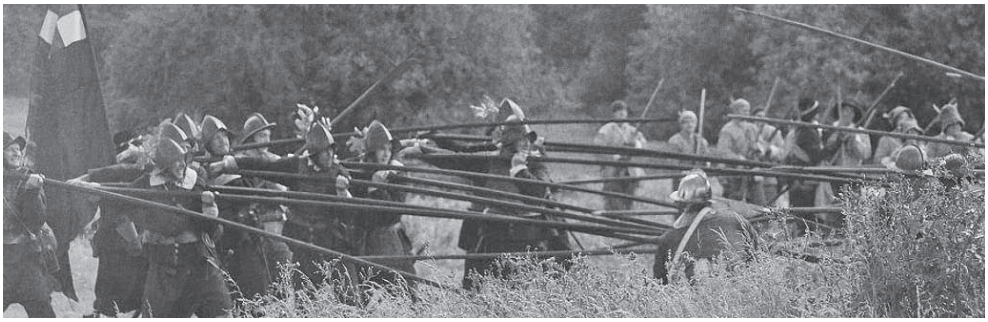


Top: Fairfax Battalia members demonstrating use of pike. Mapledurham House, July 2012.

Bottom: Battle at Mapledurham house, July 2012. Fairfax Battalia are on the right fighting The Marquess of Winchester's Foote.

Many re-enactors will spend weeks researching very specific aspects of their time period. This is due to their desire to be as historically accurate as possible. A good fight director could easily encourage re-enactors to reference contemporary fight manuals of the period, such as George Silver or Joseph Swetnam, and then apply the techniques within to a fight scenario. Therein lies the vital connection between re-enactment and a fight director, the safe application of historically martial techniques. Arguably, HEMA classes also teach correct historical technique but, as they tend toward full contact, their methods do not always show re-enactors how to realistically depict combat without the possibility of injuring themselves or others.

Re-enactment does hold particular challenges. Battles are often enormous affairs, with less focus placed on individual combat than is often presented on stage. There is less need to ensure proper staging techniques to hide kills from the audience, unless you happen to be fighting by the crowd line. As few battles are scripted, re-enactors need less emphasis on choreography and more upon technique, drills and free fighting. Safety, therefore, needs to be paramount.

With all this in mind, I gauged whether or not the Battalia members would like to learn staged sword fighting techniques. As I suspected, there were a whole slew of new members who had bought swords with no real clue as to how to use them properly. Within just two hours of posting the inquiry on Facebook, we had enough recruits to fill a class for a one day training session.

During our training day, the members of the Fairfax Battalia were taught the basic five attacks and parries that would allow them to spar against anyone trained in a similar system.[1] Safety was always paramount, so throughout the day safe weapon handling techniques were reiterated; how to block the sword with a sword first before employing other, perhaps more complicated maneuvers. They were also trained in maintaining the threat while cutting and thrusting, where the sword is kept pointed at the opponent until the last moment to prevent a counter attack. For a re-enactor, whose purpose is to represent a fight as authentically as possible, these are very useful tools.

Referencing an authentic historical fight book was also of great significance. George Silver was the main reference, as his two books, *Paradoxes of Defence* and *Further Instructions upon my Paradoxes of Defence*, written in 1599 and 1605 respectively, were aimed at soldiers rather than civilians. His emphasis was upon the short sword and the bill, both of which were used in the English Civil War,[2] so his techniques were of particular relevance to members of the Fairfax Battalia. The class focused upon the backsword, partly because common soldiers and most officers carry one, but also because Silver himself favored it. Additionally, a certain portion of the day was spent teaching swords and grapples together, as Silver recommended to 17th century soldiers when he emphasized "striking with the hilts, daggers, bucklers, wrestlings, striking with the foot or knee in the coddes" in his *Paradoxes of Defence*. By combining historical techniques with firmly established safety measures, students were able to generate small sequences of choreography that resembled free fighting.

While free fighting is common on a re-enactment, fight choreography is also useful. The last part of the day was therefore dedicated to learning how to choreograph a basic fight. On the larger battles that have 500 plus combatants, swords are rarely drawn; but, on smaller events where there are maybe 100-200 re-enactors, swords are occasionally drawn with a basic agreement as to where participants will pair up with a member from the other side and those individuals then deciding before the fight which one of them will win the day.

The Fairfax Battalia has a long-standing relationship with a regiment from the Royalist side, The Marquis of Winchester's Regiment of Foot, and regularly engages in smaller battles where only Fairfax and Winchesters take part. It is during these smaller events that sword fighting is particularly well suited, especially when portraying a siege. Teaching re-enactors how to choreograph a basic fight is therefore incredibly valuable, as it will add to the spectacle of the re-created battle, provide safety measures and enable the participants to create a realistic and dramatic sword fight.

Overall, fight directors offer a great amount to re-enactors. They can teach re-enactors how to use weapons safely while maintaining a dramatic intent to re-create violence. With knowledge about fighting techniques that are specific to a given period, fight directors can also use their abilities to re-create techniques safely and provide re-enactors with an extra dimension of authenticity to their re-creations. Fight directors and re-enactors do, after all, share common ground when it comes to the desire to interpret and portray violence for an audience.

Endnotes

1 The five attacks and parries come from sabre fencing, although George Silver does mention sword attacks that specifically target the arms and head. At least two of the five attacks tend to not appear in fight books. Due to the additional distance travelled in leg attacks, it is easy to be killed by your opponent by overstretching to hit a non-vital part of the body.

2 The bill had been relegated to siege use only by the Civil War

Bridging the Gap Between Re-enactment and Martial Arts

By Keith Farrell

I have been involved with various kinds of fighting arts and systems for most of my life. My experiences include karate, archery, sport fencing, historical battle re-enactment and historical European martial arts (HEMA) through the Academy of Historical Arts; my current disciplines of interest are medieval German longsword and early-modern regimental Scottish broadsword. Though most of my experience with these arts and systems has been through traditional martial arts, my re-enactment work has given me more perspective on fighting for the entertainment of an audience.

In different groups and organizations where I have instructed and/or fight coordinated, I have had the opportunity to witness people with martial arts backgrounds enter into more performance based societies, such as re-enactment, as well as people with re-enactment backgrounds enter into the martial arts environment. In both cases, background experience provided an advantage in the new activity, but also created hurdles and obstacles.

This article seeks to address four of the most common hurdles that I have seen in making the transition between martial arts and historical re-enactment. I also aim to provide some ideas toward helping people make a smooth and painless transition between these activities. Since my performance experience is restricted to historical battle re-enactment, any mention of "performance" in this article will refer to re-enactment as opposed to theatrical stage/screen styles of fighting. While some concepts may cross over in their application to stage/screen work, the primary focus here is the transition between the martial arts community and historical battle re-enactment, which can be very different.

PHOTO BY BARBORA LYCKOVA

HURDLE 1
Targeting the Weapon or the Person

Targeting is an issue when weapons (usually swords) are involved in a fight. In my experience with battle re-enactment, the common advice given has always been to aim at the other person's weapon with your own, so that the swords clash and look spectacular for the audience while keeping the fighters at a safe distance from each other; if the fighters can only reach their opponent's weapon, then it is unlikely that an accident or a missed parry will result in a fighter striking another. Only after the main part of the fight is done will one combatant close distance to perform the killing/disabling/finishing technique. With martial arts that involve weapons, aiming for an opponent's weapon rather than at the person is a clear sign of a beginner.

When fighting with weapons in a martial arts system, the objective is to use the weapon to strike the other person to gain victory. It would be wrong to say that martial artists ignore an opponent's weapon. Parries and defenses will, after all, cause the weapons to come in contact; however, the objective is to land a hit on the other person as swiftly as possible, which requires directly targeting openings on the body rather than aiming at the weapon first.

Targeting can be difficult to reconcile, since target focus is trained to become instinctive for both martial artists and re-enactors. It is therefore crucial that anyone seeking to make a transition between re-enactment and martial practice have adequate time to refocus appropriate targeting. Organizations must recognize a new member's previous experience with other types of fighting and gently help them to acclimatize to a new way of doing things.

Bridging the Gap: re-enactment to martial arts

For martial art organizations with a new member possessing a re-enactment background, the instructor needs to stress the development of a more martial approach to fighting. If the student insists on aiming at the weapon rather than the opponent, drills and exercises must be provided to modify this behavior gradually. The following series of exercises provide an example of how to address a student's desire to aim at the weapon rather than the opponent. Each example builds on the previous to help develop a more martial approach.

Opposite: Keith Farrell (back) and Dennis Hazenbroek (facing) performing single combat with Swords of Dalriada for the re-enactment of the Battle of Largs, September 2009.

Start with a drill where the objective is to aim at the sword, but then develop the drill so that the opponent evades the sword's contact and "wins" the exchange by landing some kind of counter strike. Developing the drill in this way teaches that striking at the opponent's weapon provides the opportunity to evade and counter-strike quite successfully.

Follow this drill by introducing an exercise that forces the newcomer to strike at the sword first (to "close the line," perhaps) and then proceed directly to a body or head strike. This exercise requires two actions, and is not ideal, but it will equip the student with a valuable skill for martial arts: follow through. If the student slips for a moment during sparring and strikes at the sword first, they must be able to continue the sequence of attacks and strike to the opponent's body immediately after the sword contact.

Finally, a sparring exercise can round out the process, with the instructor calling "strike!" at random intervals to initiate a nominated person in each sparring pair to immediately launch a strike to the opponent's head or other appointed target. This exercise develops the student ability to strike directly towards a nominated target, bypassing the opponent's weapon completely, while engaged in a continually evolving sparring session.

Bridging the Gap: martial arts to re-enactment

When a martial artist engages with an organization focused on re-enactment, it is helpful to use familiar terminology when explaining ideas and methodologies. Concepts such as "distance," "range" and "targeting" should be familiar to any well-trained martial artist and can be beneficial in the instruction process. By explaining rationales for a required increase in distance and targeting variance, a martial art based student will understand why certain techniques and training methods have been modified, thus increasing their willingness to accept, practice and enjoy this different training approach.

Once rationales are clear, exercises and choreography may be employed. Wrapping different color tape around a stick and having the student practice striking at the different bands of color can help train a student to only target the other person's weapon, rather than the body, thus increasing safety. Generating choreography can also be effective in emphasizing the story being told through the sound of the weapons. Gradually the student will acclimatize to the new approach, and learn to appreciate the new challenges of managing distance, range and employing skillful targeting in this new environment of controlled and implied violence.

HURDLE 2
Prolonged Play, or Going for the Kill

The purpose of self-defense is to defend oneself and end a fight as swiftly as possible. It is therefore difficult for martial artists to control sparring to prolong an exchange for the benefit of entertaining an audience. Re-enactment focuses on the entertainment of an audience and the participants. Consequently, re-enactors contend with the reverse scenario in a martial practice environment and must strive to avoid "playing" before looking to finish the fight.

In my battle re-enactment experience, a regular suggestion was to "just play for a little while and when a specific signal is given, do the final part and go for the kill." This suggestion works well enough for semi-choreographed re-enactment fights, but it can be quite galling for a martial artist to prolong a fight in such an indeterminate fashion.

Clarity, with regard to the purpose behind the activity, is vital in avoiding resentment and frustration between people with different points of view. If the purpose is to entertain a crowd, then ending a fight scene with a single move doesn't make sense (unless of course that is an intentional part of the production). If the purpose is self-defense, then the objective is to learn to defend as swiftly and effectively as possible.

Bridging the Gap: re-enactment to martial arts

Learning to go for the kill is an excellent opportunity for a martial arts instructor to teach several skills at once to a class. A good exercise to help develop explosiveness in attacking and the ability to sequence several attacks together as well as defend against a sudden flurry of attacks is to have combatants spar as usual, and when the instructor shouts "go," the nominated person must do their utmost to land three hits on the defender. The defender, in turn, must do their utmost to control the situation and prevent the three hits from landing. This can be accomplished by counter-attacks, "stop-hits" or "stop-thrusts" (for fencers), grapples and take-downs, or any other form of defense.

Being the attacker can help a re-enactor gain experience going directly at the opponent at random points in the fight as well as

going outside their normal comfort zone. The defensive role can help the student learn to control a situation if the opponent enters their personal space unexpectedly and aggressively.

Bridging the Gap: martial arts to re-enactment

While controlling and ending fights comes easily to the practiced martial artist, prolonging a fight to tell a story can be more difficult. The action in re-enactment style fighting must be more drawn out, which is a skill in and of its own. A good sparring game to help facilitate drawing out a fight is where partners must land a strike on each of their opponent's limbs before being allowed to implement a killing or finishing technique against the opponent's body. Effectively, the "winner" must work their way around the body of the victim and gradually "disable" them before going for the kill. This can be combined with acting out the injuries, in preparation for a performance in front of an audience.

Alternatively, a game with a martial arts based person as the "skillful bad guy," taunting an "inexperienced opponent" with their skill is equally valuable. The opponent must try to land body strikes against the bad guy, whose objective is to avoid being hit a set number of times. By "avoid," I mean moving out of distance so that a sword slash just misses the chest, turning to the side at the last moment so that a thrust aimed at the stomach passes by harmlessly. Depending on the combatants level of control and on the safety requirements of the re-enactment society, this distance can vary. Multiple attempts at these games gives the martial artist a chance to demonstrate their martial prowess while prolonging the fight scene, with either the "bad guy" triumphant or the "inexperienced opponent" winning the fight with something unexpected.

HURDLE 3
Striking, or Power Control

Moving from karate to battle re-enactment was not a problem for me. In karate we learned to control our strikes so that we could choose to land with force or land softly; moving to re-enactment where strikes were only allowed to be soft (and to restricted target areas) was an easy transition. It was significantly more difficult, however, moving from re-enactment to historical European martial arts where fencing masks and padded gloves were required because the techniques specifically call for thrusts to the face and throat, or for cutting the hands and fingers. It took me a long time to come to terms with the fact that I simply could not practice historical European martial arts properly unless my partner and I were wearing the correct safety gear and giving each other good quality "proper" strikes to work against.

Bridging the Gap: re-enactment to martial arts

When teaching historical European martial arts, involving disciplines such as the medieval German longsword or the Scottish basket-hilted broadsword, I teach the sequences in a stepwise fashion. If these steps are not made explicit to the practitioners, bad habits or "artifacts" start to creep into the training and some of the intended outcomes of the exercise are lost. A sequence taught and trained without steps will still have some benefit to the practitioners, but will not underscore the basic parts and concepts to quite the same degree.

The first step is for the attacker to make the initial attack, and this attack must land on the opponent correctly: for example, if a cut from above is supposed to hit the opponent's head, then the attacker must step forward with a meaningful cut and strike the

ABOVE: PHOTO BY: JONATHAN SPOUGE; OPPOSITE: PHOTO BY: KEITH FARRELL

Opposite: Keith Farrell (left) with John McCann (right) demonstrating how to use the strong of the blade (the part closer to the cross guard) to dominate an opponent's center line, and to land a cut onto the head straight through an inadequate defensive bind, during a beginners longsword training day with the Academy of Historical Arts, July 2012.

Above: Aristeidis Liokis (left) and Felix Lensing (right) demonstrating the 15th century German longsword concept of the Zornhaw Ort, or "wrath strike with thrust," with the Academy of Historical Arts, February 2012.

defender in a firm and controlled fashion across the fencing mask; it should not be a weak "tappy" cut, but a proper cut that gives the defender a reason to defend himself. The attacker is thus forced to practice landing proper hits and acclimatizes them to target areas that in re-enactment might well be restricted and forbidden. It also teaches the person receiving the hit that it is not the end of the world to receive a hit on the fencing mask, and acclimatizes them to the feeling of being hit in a controlled environment.

Once the initial attack is established, the defender can begin to parry or avoid the strike. After a few times exploring the defender's defensive action, the third step can be integrated. The last step in this progression is where the defender completes their defense and lands their own hit on the attacker.

Of these, the first step is the most important. Of course, the subsequent steps each teach interesting things from the historical sources, but it is all for nothing if the initial attack is meaningless. These steps also acclimatize both partners to the importance of protective gear and striking bodily targets re-enactors would otherwise hesitate to attack properly.

Bridging the Gap: martial arts to re-enactment

Depending on the martial arts experience, the transition difficulty into re-enactment can vary. As mentioned above, going from karate to re-enactment was easy for me, but for me to go now from historical European martial arts (where most sequences involve a strike or thrust to the head or face) back to battle re-enactment (where the head is completely out of bounds) would quite simply not be safe, as my muscle memory has been trained to produce head strikes and face thrusts even in the absence of fencing masks.

People who can adapt easily will not have much difficulty fitting into a choreographed bout or semi-choreographed bout with limited

target areas; choreography can therefore be used as a litmus test to see how easily a person will adapt. If a newcomer can adapt easily, then phrases like "light contact" or "avoid the head" can act as a gentle reminder of what is acceptable and what is not. If the person is having difficulty performing fluently and naturally in a choreographed or semi-choreographed bout then it can be an indicator that muscle memory from previous experience is making adapting to a new approach a difficult process.

If a newcomer is having difficulty adjusting to the more restricted world of re-enactment, then look for ways to ease the transition. Choreograph a few sequences without strikes to the restricted areas, but still allow both fighters to wear fencing masks or the protective gear to which the martial artist is accustomed. Gradually wean the new student off the protective gear as they become more accustomed to not attacking restricted areas. This approach will make the student more confident in their ability to keep their partner safe.

HURDLE 4
Fighting for Your Enjoyment, or for Audience Entertainment

Many martial artists love to spar, and enjoy nothing better than a challenging sparring match with a skilled friend. This can often take the form of vying for position, waiting for an opening, starting a technique but recognizing the danger and pulling back to safety… until finally a single, short and explosive exchange takes place with one person emerging victorious. Of course, while both fighters enjoy this immensely, it is very dull to watch for an audience seeking entertainment.

Re-enactors often enjoy the experience of "just playing" and exchanging strikes at each other, with neither person particularly trying to win; for many re-enactors simply handling a sword provides the greatest enjoyment. When introduced to a martial arts environment, re-enactors may experience frustration because what they perceive to be enjoyable is not common within martial arts.

Bridging the Gap: re-enactment to martial arts

The key to helping a re-enactor learn to enjoy the "waiting game" and subtleties of a good martial arts fight is not to force them to blindly accept this new way of doing things. If an instructor can help the new student to understand how and why things are done and demonstrate/share the enjoyment of the methods then, as the student begins to excel, the experience will be more pleasant for everyone.

One particularly standard re-enactment drill consists of one person attacking while the other is only allowed to defend. This drill is intrinsically flawed for both re-enactors and martial artists because it breeds all kinds of bad habits in the attacker (attacking without thought of defense, exposing the hands, not engaging possible counter attacks, etc.) and it stamps out good behavior in the defender (looking for openings, performing stop-hits, taking advantage of an attacker's slow responses, etc.). It is counter-productive in every way. With one simple alteration, however, it can become a valuable game that addresses every problem with the original drill.

The altered version allows the defender to make a single counter attack during the drill. If the defender hits, they win, and if they miss (or are hit by the attacker) then the defender loses. It is difficult for the defender to win, but it does become possible. Altering the drill in this way forces the attacker to attack carefully and sensibly, withdrawing and covering as appropriate and practicing all their skills. It also gives the defender the chance to hit the attacker if an opening presents itself. The game, therefore, becomes valuable for martial arts practice in general and involves enough "play" for a re-enactor to enjoy the experience while learning valuable martial arts skills and the correct kind of martial arts mindset.

Bridging the Gap: martial arts to re-enactment

While martial arts are all about the self, re-enactment is all about the audience. This concept can be tricky for a martial artist looking to take up re-enactment. It can be difficult for them to put aside previously learned ideas of what to do in a fight and instead focus on what looks good and provides the best entertainment.

The issue is more mental than physical, so a group's environment and atmosphere is important. A common battle re-enactment mistake is praising the skill of the fighter who wins, thus fostering a competitive environment where personal skill is valued. Doing so makes it more difficult for martial artists making the transition to step back and to accept losing a fight in order to please the crowd.

A much more valuable option is to make sure that the environment is such that entertainment and showmanship is appreciated and valued more than personal victory/skill. If the environment takes on these later characteristics then assimilation will occur more swiftly than an environment that is halfway between the intended result (audience entertainment) and a new member's martial arts background (personal skill and competition).

Another exercise to help the martial artist acclimatize to this new way of thinking is to have students work in pairs to develop a short fight scene. The pairs take turns demonstrating their fight to the rest of the group, with the group then scoring each performance in terms of how entertained they felt throughout. To give a little more focus, scenarios can be provided, such as a master against his student with the student emerging triumphant, or a dramatic showdown on a bridge, or an overly-theatrical performance where the combatants are asked to include as many cheesy one-liners as possible. The latter option is good, since the scenario is far from a "real" fight and the purpose is completely different. It is easier to behave differently when the situation is overtly unreal, and gradually the newcomer can acclimatize to the group's way of doing things.

Conclusion

People with different backgrounds have different points of view about what they view as right and wrong as well as what is reasonable and acceptable. Newcomers to an established group must remember that the group's way of doing things is probably the most appropriate for the sphere in which the group operates; if coming to a Viking battle re-enactment society from a karate organization, then it is important to adopt the re-enactment way of thinking rather than trying to force a karate approach. Likewise, if a re-enactor joins a martial arts group, they must blend with how the group operates.

Mutual respect is the key to a smooth transition. The newcomer must try to fit in with the new group, but the group must also make efforts for the newcomer to acclimatize. Martial arts groups need to encourage their re-enactment based students to land hits properly, to think of the work as a competition rather than play, but should not force the issue and suggest that everything the newcomer learned previously is worthless. Likewise, re-enactment groups need to encourage newcomers with a martial arts background to perform for the entertainment of the audience, to learn not to strike at restricted targets and not belittle their experience or hard-earned skills.

As with most things in life, environment is exceptionally important. By helping a new member to acclimatize to the group's methodologies, placing values on selective aspects of the activity and, above all, making it fun and enjoyable, a newcomer will transition easily and bridge the gap between re-enactment and martial arts.

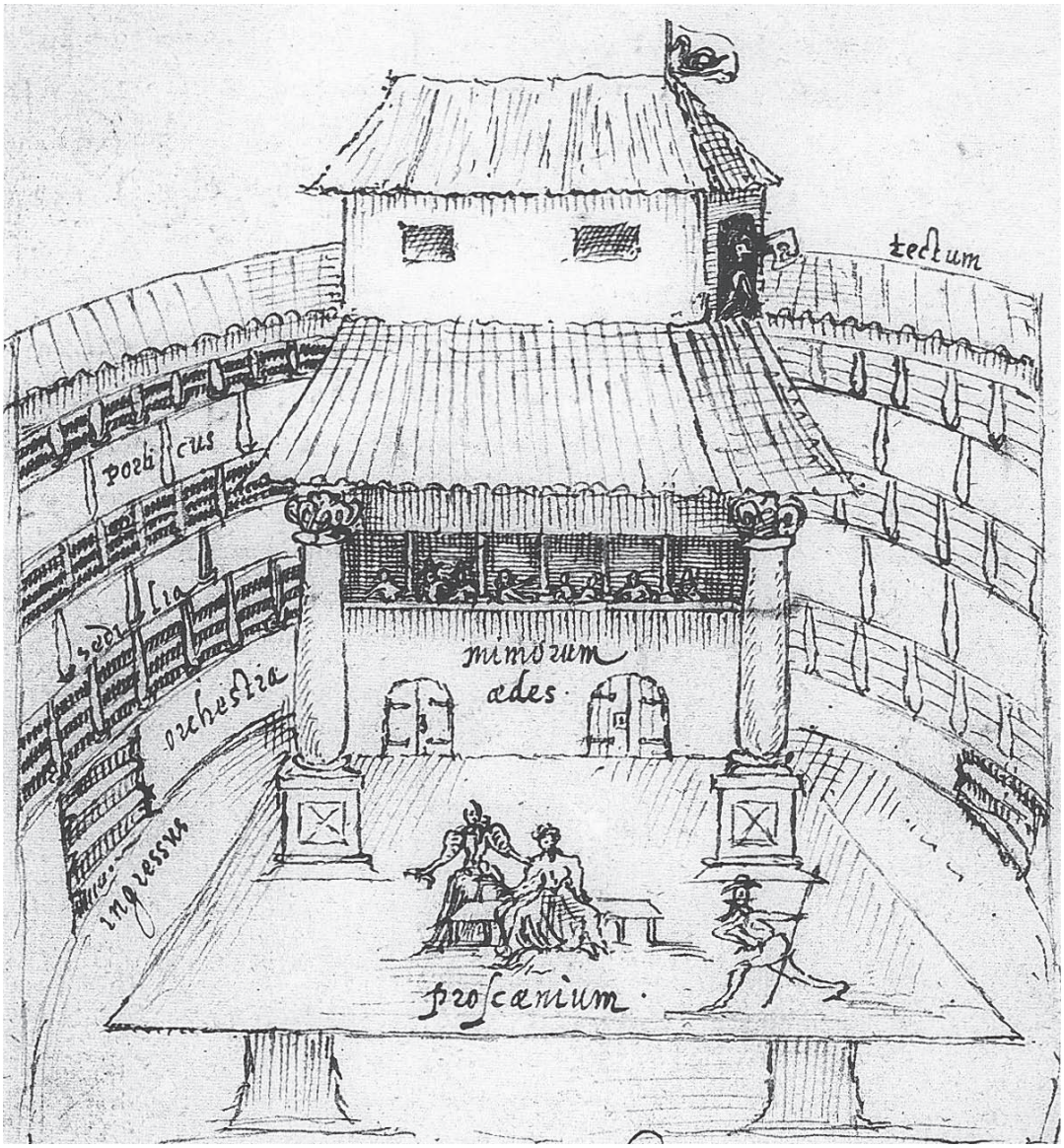
Fight Direction Under "Interesting" Conditions

Part 1: Training

By Steven Schwall

There is an old Chinese saying, "May you live in interesting times." It is debatable whether the saying is a blessing or a curse, as the definition of "interesting" is open to interpretation. What often contribute to "interesting times" are the challenges presented with given endeavors, which could also be blessings or curses.

I have spent the last several years as the fight director for Pigeon Creek Shakespeare, a touring company, which employs an "original practices" approach. For those unfamiliar with the concept, "original practice" refers to the employment of rehearsal and performance conditions that existed during Shakespeare's lifetime. Conditions such as universal lighting, short rehearsal periods, variable playing spaces, small casts with lots of doubling and cross-gender casting generate some "interesting" challenges with an "original practice" approach to Shakespeare's work. As a fight director, these conditions inform both the creation of choreography as



1596 sketch by Johannes de Witt, a dutch student who attended a performance at The Globe theatre in London. The original is held at the Utrecht University Library in The Netherlands.

well as how actors are trained. Although both elements often inform each other, I will focus the first part of my examination on how I train novice actor combatants to fight safely with shortened rehearsal periods and in diverse locations. Before continuing, I need to detail some of the conditions of this work.

The first condition is a shortened rehearsal period. Pigeon Creek usually only rehearses for about four weeks, rather than the six to eight week period employed by other theaters in the area. The rehearsals are only three hours long, five days a week. During the school year, the first performance week is a 90-minute "cutting" designed for high school field trips. So, there are effectively only three weeks spent rehearsing the uncut play, with the final week given to rehearsing the cut version. I, therefore, need to have my actors ready in three weeks, with only about four to six hours a week devoted to fight rehearsal.

The next "interesting" condition is that Pigeon Creek has brought the Elizabethan cross-gender casting practice into the 21st century, with many of the male roles being played by women. The cast size is usually about eleven or twelve, more than half of which are women. Few of the actors have advanced training in Theater, with a couple holding Masters degrees in Literature. Beginning undergraduates are also used in smaller roles, much like the hired men of Shakespeare's day. This means that over half the cast is not trained in any use of arms. To address this, I build basic training into my schedule of rehearsals, which further shortens the time for teaching choreography.

Not only do some actors lack training, but as a touring company, the venues change as well, which presents an "interesting" condition all by itself. Sometimes the playing area is only 25 feet square while other times it is rectangular (15 feet by 50 feet). Pigeon Creek Shakespeare stages its productions in a traditional thrust staging, utilizing three entrances along the rear wall and two entrances off the downstage corners. But not every venue provides these specifications. Some of the venues are traditional proscenium houses, with the downstage access as side doors along the walls in front of the arch. In some cases, this can create long crossovers for characters, which can change the timing of the violent actions. Other venues provide a downstage access out into the house, but with no hope of crossing back to an upstage entrance. Traffic patterns for large battles, therefore, need to be flexible to accommodate every new venue, which also means the training must enable choreography to be extended or condensed, depending on the timing of the action.[1]

So how does one "train" actors under the conditions of a limited rehearsal period, actors playing multiple roles with various skill levels and an evolving playing space? As a teacher of stage combat, I usually teach a full range of techniques in the classroom to give an actor a "broad range" of skills to employ. With "original practice" rehearsal methods, training must be specific to the show. What styles of weapons are being used? What techniques are specific to those weapons?

In productions of *Macbeth* and *Henry V* with Pigeon Creek, medieval swords were used, whereas *Hamlet* utilized early 20th century fencing sabers. Body postures, angles of attack and styles of swordplay differ, so I limited my training to only what the actors needed to execute the choreography. With *Macbeth* and *Henry V,* I limited footwork training to passing steps (forward and back) and thwarts to the sides. The strokes were limited to the simple five lines of attack (mid-thighs, upper arms and center head) commonly used in most SAFD training. In *Hamlet*, the focus was more on the advance/retreat style of footwork and the eight-point compass that

saber fencing utilizes. In both cases, the drills used to set the physical techniques were created based on the choreography to come, so that the actors were learning technique and choreography simultaneously. This was especially true for *Hamlet*, where the drills were short mini-phrases that were incorporated to make up the final duel. By building the choreography into the technique drills, I saved precious rehearsal time and was able to focus on stylistic ideas (intention, posture, position) rather than teaching choreography.

In addition to teaching drills, I also give actors "drill scripts" to memorize, just as they memorize their lines. We go over the script as we learn the drill, so that the actors understand how the notation corresponds to the movements they are learning. Thus, they have a movement script to rehearse on their own, since I do not have the luxury of seeing them every day. A sample drill script might look like this:

Cut 4, pass fwd R
Cut 3, pass fwd L
Parry 7, pass back L
Parry 2, pass back R
Bind over, pass fwd R
Horizontal belly slash

If this "drill script" is for partner "A," a corresponding script is written for partner "B." Corresponding scripts are passed out to actors who will eventually become fight partners on stage, thus treating choreography much like rehearsing dialogue. When the actors come into the next rehearsal, time is spent adjusting distance, matching tempi and fine-tuning technique, rather than teaching and drilling choreography. In many cases, scripts like the one above are the entire engagement for a couple in a mass battle, so all that is needed in rehearsal is to stage the entry and exit from the engagement.

One of the problems inherent in an abbreviated training time frame with many untrained combatants is getting actors over the "fear factor;" the fear that they might accidentally hurt their partner, which affects both positioning and body postures. I therefore focus heavily on the intention of the fight in rehearsals. I find that if actors focus on how to physically communicate the intention of an action, they think less about the action, much like focusing on inner motivations for a line rather than the line itself. A technique I sometimes employ is the one-on-one session. Somewhere in week two, once the choreography has been taught, if I see that actors are having trouble executing due to fear, I spend a private session with each actor to encourage them to abandon the restraints they put on themselves out of fear of hurting their partner. If they are extraordinarily afraid (pulling energy in blows), I employ some protective fencing gear and encourage them to really try and strike me, then dial it back and refine the technique. It is similar to experimenting with over-acting; taking a characterization to an extreme and then dialing it back into a level that works. I try to demonstrate that, as long as they perform the technique properly, casting energy and with full intention, they cannot hurt me. Then, I abandon the safety net of protective gear and we fight again. Actors often have a "light bulb moment" when they realize that they can commit to the movements as fully as they commit to their lines. Partners are then brought back together to experience the alteration. Time constraints only allow for about a 10-minute session per actor and a final 10 minutes back together, but it can be a valuable rehearsal technique that I have to anticipate using.

So, my formula for training actors under these "interesting" conditions consists of a) training only those hand and footwork techniques that are applicable to the style of the production during week one; b) producing "fight scripts" that also become mini-phrases of choreography that can be rehearsed and memorized outside the rehearsal room, allowing for week two rehearsals to focus on improving style and communicating intention; and c) having one-on-one sessions during week three to overcome the "fear factor," tweak positioning, refine timing, and improve style and posture.

Fight calls are included before each run during week three, so there are usually two times through fight sequences each night. This helps "set" the sequences with the actors and provides time to adjust and adapt as necessary. Fortunately, time is built into the load-in process during the run as well, to thoroughly explore each new space and make adjustments as needed.

Following this process allows me to successfully navigate the conditions of an "original practices" approach, with variously skilled actors, limited rehearsal time and set a firm foundation that allows for alterations depending on time or space constraints. Working under these conditions is definitely "living in interesting times." Whether a blessing or a curse is still open to debate. Part 2 of this examination will focus on choreography creation and how these conditions inform that process.

Endnotes

1 Actors do not learn two different fights or learn a new fight for each venue. They simply have movements, which they already know and have rehearsed for weeks, added if more time is needed or subtracted if the action needs to be shorter. Changing choreography is a last resort, as I try to solve the problems by altering the timing of entrances, but remains in the back of my mind as a possible necessity.

When the Sword Makes the Pen Mightier

BY ALISON SKY RICHARDS

"You studied sword fighting to do what?"

I have received this question countless times from friends, both in the writing world as well as other combat fighters. With only a single stage credit on my resume, two weapon styles proficiencies (broadsword and small sword, for those curious) and a theatre minor from a prestigious university where I studied both unarmed and armed combat as part of the curriculum, the fact that I put so much time and money toward learning how to write fight scenes is a mystery to those who don't sit behind a computer eight hours a day watching lines of text going across a screen.

Scriptwriters don't need to detail out the specifics of a fight down to the finest nuance. For the most part, they know how the fight starts, who needs to win and transitions between any dialogues that comes in the middle of a fight. The fight itself springs from the minds of the director(s) and fight choreographer(s). An audience receives the fight visually through the director(s)/choreographer(s) perspective and even then the most uneducated audience member can tell when a fight lacks the elements of dramatic effectiveness and/or is half-heartedly attempted.

Books aren't given the luxury of a visual medium to show their stories. The images that come to a person's mind when they read are from the descriptive techniques that writers develop when they are learning their craft. Being able to write a description of the scenery to make the reader see, smell and hear the world that the character lives in isn't something that a writer develops overnight.

In fact, the writing community will tell new writers that their first million words written will be pure crap. The success of a first time novel is rare, and writers need to continue to perfect their writing with each novel that they write. By the time a writer becomes known to the general public, there are typically a dozen or more failed attempts in the back of an overflowing filing cabinet in their basement, gathering dust and likely never be seen or read.

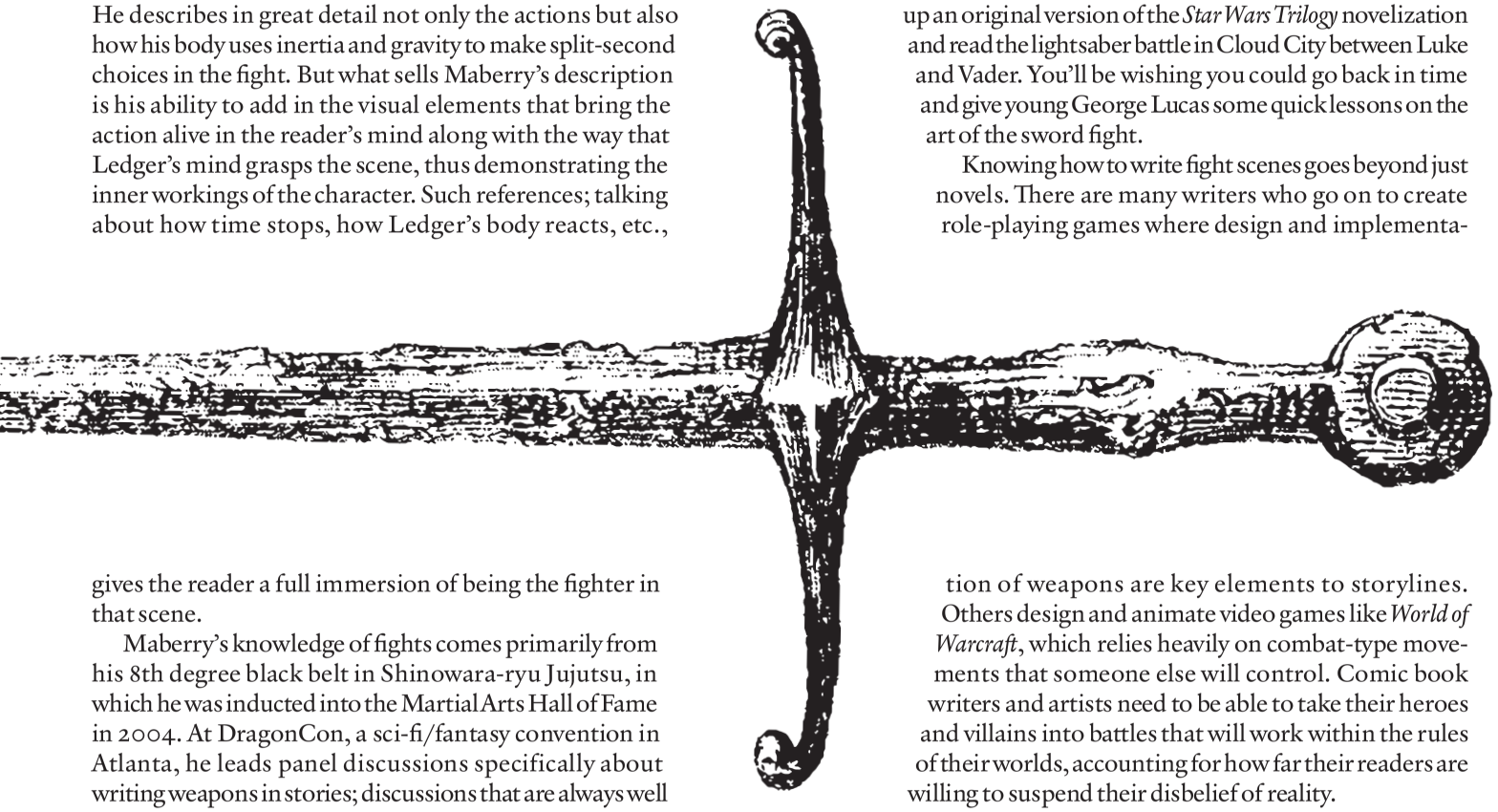
Every novel, whether it is romance, mystery, fantasy or thriller, has to have some sort of conflict to make it capture the reader's interest. There needs to be action, and in most cases the action and conflict combine into a fight scene that they will need to describe so that the reader can visualize it. Writers can go out and tap their vast legion of resources and connections to get the info they need to make a scene work, but they are ultimately still responsible for the words that they will type.

For myself, I didn't want to rely on a source to be able to see how the body moved. It's a very basic thing when you think about it; realizing how your body moves and reacts in a fight turns a choreographed fight scene into a dance between partners. I knew I was going to need some hands on experience if I wanted to be worth

anything as a writer, or as I told my first combat instructor, Steve Vaughan, I'm from New York City and it's about time that I learn to play with knives.

Beyond the knowledge of just the human body and how it moves, knowing the real weight of a weapon and the soreness that it can cause when used in a fight without training can lead to comedic scenes before, during and after a fight that someone who has never picked up a weapon would fail to capitalize on. I know I will never forget the pain in my shoulder after my first broadsword class.

A well written unarmed fight scene occurs in Chapter 5 of Jonathan Maberry's *Patient Zero*, depicting how Joe Ledger, a Baltimore detective, reacts the first time he comes face-to-face with the zombies that were created due to a terrorist bioweapon. Readers are able to follow the fight step by step with his description of the punches and kicks, along with the power he puts into them. He describes in great detail not only the actions but also how his body uses inertia and gravity to make split-second choices in the fight. But what sells Maberry's description is his ability to add in the visual elements that bring the action alive in the reader's mind along with the way that Ledger's mind grasps the scene, thus demonstrating the inner workings of the character. Such references; talking about how time stops, how Ledger's body reacts, etc., gives the reader a full immersion of being the fighter in that scene.



Maberry's knowledge of fights comes primarily from his 8th degree black belt in Shinowara-ryu Jujutsu, in which he was inducted into the Martial Arts Hall of Fame in 2004. At DragonCon, a sci-fi/fantasy convention in Atlanta, he leads panel discussions specifically about writing weapons in stories; discussions that are always well attended. His background and contacts reveal their benefit where it matters the most, in his writing.

Some authors use the trick of writing around a fight scene. While it doesn't give the visual of the fight, the author instead focuses on the moments of dialogue between the fights. They distract the reader from seeing the play by play and reduce the physical part of the fight down to a few sentences that are usually from a third person's perspective and sum up the action as a "series of blows were exchanged" before moving on to the next dialogue moment.

Of course, the realm of science fiction and fantasy not only provide an adventure-based genre, but also the ability to create new weapons. Writers need to be able to give these weapons rules on how they are used so that they can become believable. The lightsabers in *Star Wars* have continued on through almost 200 books since the expanded universe began in 1992 when Timothy Zahn's *Heir to the Empire* hit bookstore shelves. On screen, lightsabers were cool weapons that the Jedi and Sith used and tended to result in cutting off an opponent's hand with a twist of the wrist.

Anyone who has seen these movies knows what the lightsaber looks like. They know what it does. But in *Heir to the Empire*, this weapon is introduced to new Jedi and Sith who have never held it before. The questions of how does it work, how does it get its color and can it be used without cutting off a student's hand need to be answered otherwise there are going to be a lot more people running around that universe without a hand or two. Twenty years' worth of writers have only had five fight scenes to work with from the original trilogy and let's face it, only the ones from *Return of the Jedi* are notable for being more than a simple cut 3, cut 4, diagonal slash type fight.

The prequels pulled from notes that the expanded universe writers theorized in their novels to make their fight scenes.

And for an example of bad lightsaber fight writing, pick up an original version of the *Star Wars Trilogy* novelization and read the lightsaber battle in Cloud City between Luke and Vader. You'll be wishing you could go back in time and give young George Lucas some quick lessons on the art of the sword fight.

Knowing how to write fight scenes goes beyond just novels. There are many writers who go on to create role-playing games where design and implementation of weapons are key elements to storylines. Others design and animate video games like *World of Warcraft*, which relies heavily on combat-type movements that someone else will control. Comic book writers and artists need to be able to take their heroes and villains into battles that will work within the rules of their worlds, accounting for how far their readers are willing to suspend their disbelief of reality.

If you don't believe me, here's my parting thought: go to the library or bookstore and pick up a copy of *The Princess Bride*. Without watching the movie beforehand, read the five-page fight scene between Inigo and Westley on the Cliffs of Insanity and read how William Goldman moves his characters across the page to bring the thrill and excitement of that fight to life long before it was ever translated and choreographed for the screen. There is no better example in my mind of how to write a fight scene than this.

I may never grace the stage or screen to show off my skills with the blade, but I will never feel that my study was a waste of time. I know my weapons inside and out, and my friends know when I'm really writing because they see me out on the lawn with my sword, dancing with an invisible partner before stabbing the weapon into the ground so I can write down the next sentence in my notebook.

Reintroducing Patrick Crean Award Winner

Armand Schultz

BY J. ALLEN SUDDETH

Above: Armand Schultz

Opposite: A photo of Armand with Denzel Washington in *Richard III* at the Public Theatre's Delacourt Theatre.

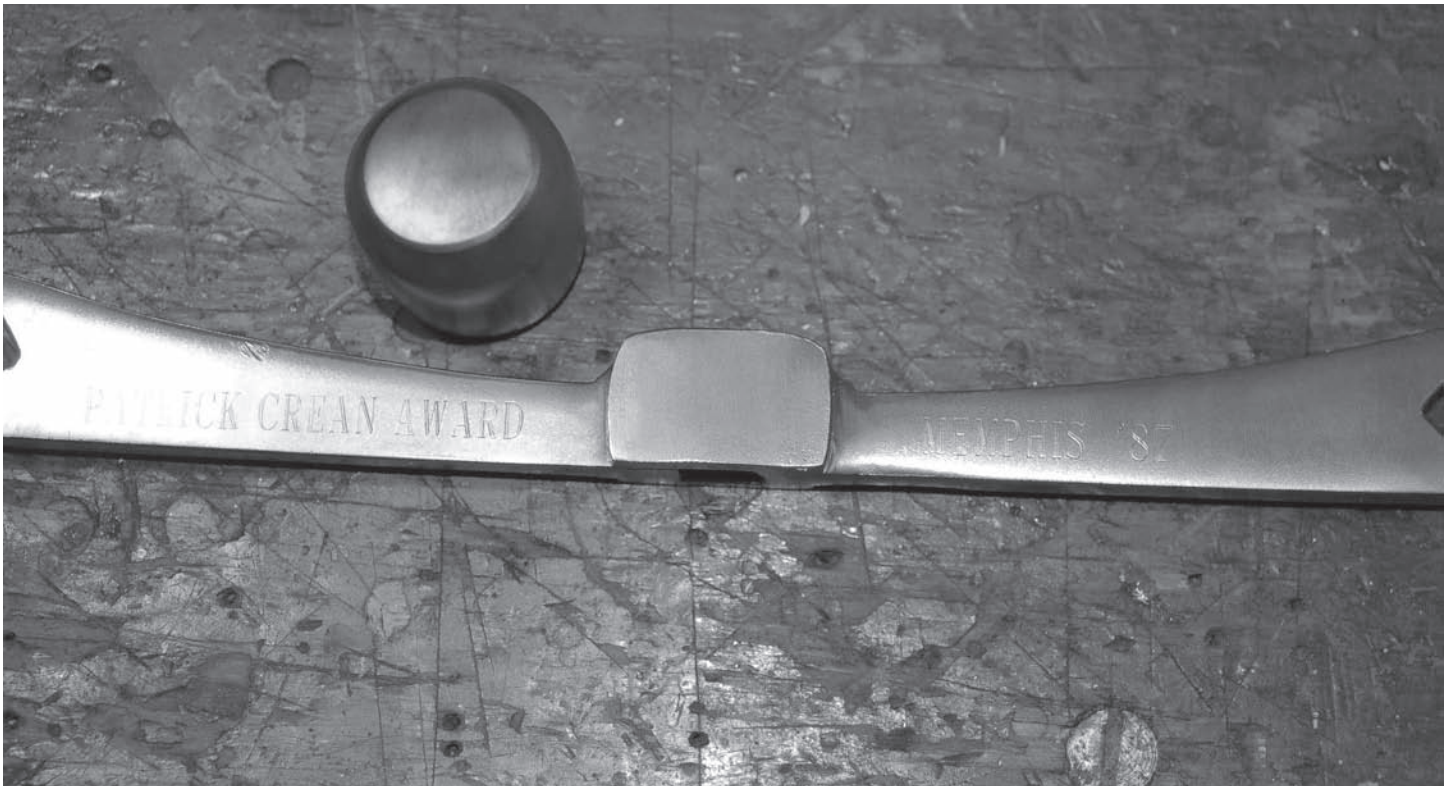
Patrick Crean was a world renowned Fight Director before the title was coined or widely recognized. He was also my teacher and friend for over 30 years. In 1987, Paddy (as his friends affectionately knew him) was invited to return to the National Stage Combat Workshop (NSCW) to teach a set of master classes, spread good cheer and tell tales of his life in theater and film. As always, he did this with great relish and wit.

It was during the 1987 NSCW that the staff, consisting of David Leong, Drew Fracher, Joe Martinez, David Boushey and myself first instituted the Patrick Crean Award on behalf of the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD). As defined in the SAFD Policies and Procedures 2012, the Patrick Crean Award is given out by the NSCW Fight Master teaching staff to a worthy student or staff member "who has displayed a high degree of skill as an Actor/Combatant, has emerged as a leader among their peers and displays a commitment to honorable and just actions in all they do." While the tradition continues to identify these exemplary individuals, their value has tended to be forgotten over time.

In an effort to rediscover these award winners, I have undertaken to interview the first recipient of the Patrick Crean Award. Armand (Army) Schultz had athletic ability and acting chops to match, but also engaged everyone with whom he interacted on a positive and honorable level. Armand was chosen to be the first recipient of this prestigious award and Paddy proudly presented it to Armand at the 1987 NSCW closing ceremonies (the first and only time this happened).

Since Armand's recognition, he has gone on to work in such Broadway productions as *Frost/Nixon*, *The Herbal Bed*, *A View from the Bridge*, and *Cyrano de Bergerac*. Off-Broadway, he has appeared in *Major Crimes*, *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, and *Richard III*, among many others. His film and television work includes such notable projects as *Salt*, *Burn After Reading*, *Vanilla Sky*, *Elementary*, *House of Cards*, *Unforgettable*, *The Good Wife*, *Life on Mars*, *Damages*, *Law and Order*, *Gossip Girl* and *Law and Order: SVU*. His fight work has ranged from

LEFT: PHOTO BY RON RINALDI; OPPOSITE: PHOTO BY MARTHA SWOPE



Above: This is a close up view of the engraving on Armand's sword. The sword was made by Rod Casteel, engraved and donated by him, and might have been the first weapon presented to a winner, circa 1987. Many other sword artisans have since donated their work for this award, most notably Lewis Shaw.

fist fights to stabbings; broadsword and shield to gun play. He has "shot" other actors and been "shot" on television; been slapped and spit on and was even hit in the face with a trashcan on a soap opera. Armand and I formed a friendship in the summer of 1987 that has continued to this day, which I believe is as Paddy would have liked it. Armand and I discussed his recognition recently.

My hope is that this interview will be the first in an ongoing series whereby past recipients may be rediscovered and highlighted for their outstanding achievements, but also to provide insight as to how their efforts, which contributed to their initial recognition, have continued to shape their lives. There is a rich history held within these award winners that I feel should be shared for the benefit of the entire stage combat community.

Allen: To give the readers some background, could you describe what prior training you had before coming to the National Stage Combat Workshop?

Armand: I have a BA in English/Communications from Niagara University (1981), where I got involved in their well-respected theatre program, which is now a BFA program. At that time I was studying to become a film director, but to learn more about staging I volunteered at the theatre, became involved in all aspects of the process, was "dared" to audition and was cast as Gregory in *Romeo and Juliet*; my first acting role in my freshman year, where I had to learn to sword fight. Staged by a fencing instructor and a ballet choreographer, it was safe but not exciting. Many lead roles later, when trying to decide between graduate film school or a career as an actor, I chose to attend a graduate acting program to further my acting craft.

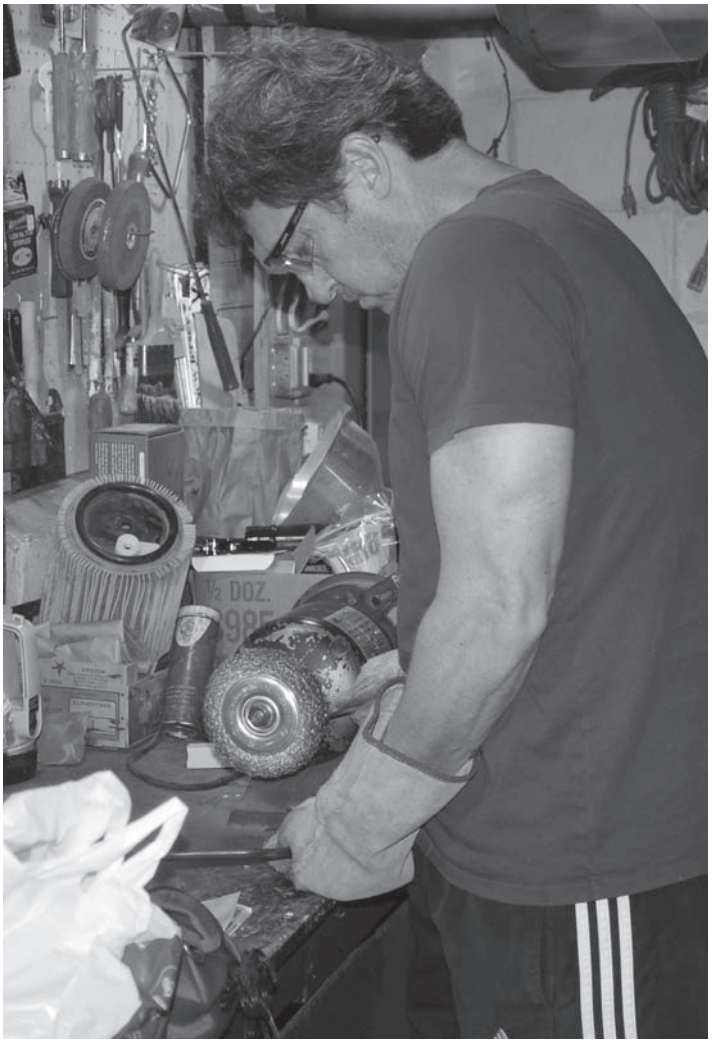
As I had only taken one acting class as an undergraduate, I felt I needed to really learn the craft, so I applied to three schools that granted an MFA in Acting. I was given a scholarship to attend Catholic University in Washington, DC where I graduated in 1985. While at Catholic, stage combat training was not a part of the curriculum, we had a physical theatre class where Tom Schall, who was part of the Folger Shakespeare Company at the time, came in once as a guest and did a basic slap/punch class. I was fortunate enough to play the title role in *Cyrano de Bergerac*; however, once again we had a fencing coach in as our choreographer. He was a nice man, but offered very simple stuff, not very exciting. Basically, the same moves just on different parts of the stage.

I'm sure budgetary concerns were an issue, but with Arena Stage, Folger and Baltimore Center Stage close by, I always wondered why we couldn't have gotten a fight director; it was *Cyrano de Bergerac* after all. Other than that, if there was a punch, fall or whatever, we as young actors just had to figure it out for ourselves and survive. When I got to the NSCW, needless to say, it was a revelation.

Allen: What lead you to the National Stage Combat Workshop?

Armand: I met David Boushey while I was "in residence" at Cornell University as part of their Resident Professional Theatre Associate program in the academic year '86/'87. The program was designed as an opportunity for recent MFA graduates to be directed by well known theatre directors, attend master classes by other guest artists while teaching undergraduate acting courses and performing as part of the university acting company in both main stage and lab spaces. David Feldshuh and Bruce Levitt created the program and I was one of the first three actors invited to participate.

Bruce was a director and had worked at Fort Worth Shakespeare, which I believe is where he knew David Boushey. David came in for a weekend workshop/demonstration. I and another actor in the program worked with him as his fighter/"guinea pigs" in the workshop. Boushey said I had an aptitude for combat and should check out the NSCW and certify. As it turned out, I spent that summer



Above: A photo of Armand polishing up his "Paddy Crean Award" sword in the basement workshop of J. Allen Suddeth.

at Fort Worth Shakespeare playing Petruchio and Proteus in repertoire and, shortly after we closed, flew to Memphis for the Workshop. It just perfectly fit my summer schedule. David Boushey's encouragement and generosity of craft were definite motivators. It always spurs you to a challenge when someone has a belief in your talent; especially coming from one of the founders of the SAFD.

Allen: Since you had the opportunity to meet and work with Paddy, could you share any impressions and/or memories?

Armand: I have been a huge Errol Flynn fan since I was a child (Paddy choreographed and doubled Flynn in *Master of Ballantrae*). So, during the week that Paddy was with us, I woke up early every morning to have breakfast at his table. I remember asking if he would mind my doing that and he said he would welcome my company. He told great stories in the morning, encompassing everything from Flynn to stage productions to his definition of ZA! It was a great experience for a young actor.

Paddy's attention to detail in performance was incredible and he exuded class. To him, stage combat was a craft to be learned to the best of one's ability, so that it could transform into art on stage. He treated everyone with dignity, no matter what the skill level. Every actor intent on learning what he had to offer deserved his attention.

After winning the award, he offered that should I want to come up to Stratford in Canada to study with him at any time, he would be available. Unfortunately, my career and family life didn't give me the opportunity to take him up on that offer. I regret that I didn't make the time to go and learn more from him. At the time, my acting career was becoming very busy and I didn't see myself becoming a fight choreographer. I should have gone anyway. He sent me an autographed copy of his autobiography, which I had asked for, with a lovely inscription for all the best in my life and career.

Allen: What do you remember about receiving the Paddy Crean award?

Armand: Paddy Crean presented me with the award and I was so shocked to receive it that I don't remember what was said. I didn't even know there were awards. I was just elated to have passed all my weapons with Recommendation (Rapier and Dagger, Broadsword, Smallsword, Quarterstaff and Unarmed). In addition to this honor, my partner, Joe Dempsey, was awarded Best Male Fighter and our scene was awarded Best Scene for the Night at the Fights presentation.

Allen: Did your attendance at the NSCW and receiving these awards have an impact on you following the workshop?

Armand: After the NSCW, David Leong offered me a fight captain position on a production of *Coriolanus* at the McCarter Theatre. Though that didn't work out, we kept in touch and after I returned from an acting gig at Center Stage in Baltimore, Leong left me a message saying I should come meet a bunch of the "fight guys" in NYC at a certification test and check out this training school being run by J. Allen Suddeth.

At that time, depending upon the class at ACTS (Actors Combat Training School), you could be fighting with J. Allen, Richard Raether, Rick Sordelet, David Brimmer, Brian Byrnes and the list goes on. Also, whatever fight master happened to be in town would stop by and connect with his colleagues. After taking advanced classes there for about a year, between acting gigs, I was invited to become a member of Fights R Us, a talented group of fighters who would train together, perform for charity events and develop fight based shows for performance in NYC. I was fortunate to get to know many choreographers and certified teachers who have gone on to climb the ranks both within the SAFD as well as the larger stage combat/stunt community. J. Allen Suddeth has become a life long friend and in every city that I travel, it seems I know someone from those training days.

Allen: Has your award helped you professionally?

Armand: It is hard to say how much the Patrick Crean Award has helped my career. As an actor, the director or producer has the final say in casting. As I studied with most of the top choreographers, they knew me when I would show up for an audition/call-back for a show with a fight component; but, usually the award served to verify my abilities and confirm that if the company hired me, their production could contain some highly skilled and exciting fights.

The award also gave me credibility, so that if I was working with a novice choreographer or an actor who was unskilled/untrained I could speak up regarding any potential danger. It didn't happen a lot, but more often than you would think, and at some prestigious theatres. Having the SAFD and this award on my resume backed up my knowledge base.

Allen: What do you think is the "spirit" of the Patrick Crean Award?

Armand: I know this is the highest award that the SAFD gives

OPPOSITE AND ABOVE: PHOTOS BY J. ALLEN SUDDETH

Armand and J. Allen Suddeth in costume at the Action Film Workshop. They met at the NSCW in 1987 and have remained friends and colleagues ever since.

and as Paddy's name is on it, it means to me a sense of "honor" in how I treat other performers and the art and craft of stage combat. I have always valued the training of the SAFD and the safety and artistry the organization embodies, but I have worked with equally talented choreographers who are not members and treat them with the respect they deserve. It is important to work collaboratively, regardless of affiliations, toward accepting the ideas and artistic goals of the choreographer while keeping the character in mind at all times. I will not surrender my sense of safety or personal integrity, but rather try to approach all rehearsals and performances with a sense of class, adventure and excitement while relying on my training. I think that may be my sense of the "spirit" of the award. There is always something new to learn, and when you learn it, do it with ZA!

Allen: Have you kept up with the SAFD as a member?

Armand: I have kept up with the SAFD through my connections with choreographers. I have had opportunities to recommend fight choreographers to directors when asked for my input, which has resulted in many being hired. While they could have been hired of their own accord, an extra recommendation never hurt.

I admit that I have let my "Friend" status lapse. As an actor, I have not attempted to obtain a teaching certification or take the road toward becoming a fight director as there are still acting goals to be attempted, which have their own challenges.

Allen: What advice/knowledge relating to stage combat would you like to pass long to the next generation of theatre artists?

Armand: To me the value of stage violence training is that it is truly part of the "craft" of the actor. On stage, whatever the run of a show, the actor must not only feel protected and safe, but also hold complete control, as they do with the text. An actor cannot "fear" stage violence. There are no stunt doubles or CGI on the stage. Through solid training and mastery of technique, an actor can incorporate whatever violence is required with complete commitment.

Knowing that you and your partner(s) will be safe and that climactic moments will be exciting and dramatic to the audience, gives the freedom to invest fully in the emotions of the character and a full realization of the scene. There won't be that little voice in the back of your mind saying "oh no, here comes the fight", but rather the violence that is called for is part of your character's action and flows from the actions of the play.

The other great advantage of training is being able to protect yourself by speaking up when you feel unsafe with a certain move or if the person you are working with, choreographer or actor, is unsafe or reckless. You have to always remember that on stage, in rehearsal, or even on a film or television set (working with stunt coordinators or fight arrangers) you and your body are most important. It's all you have. You must speak up if you feel under-rehearsed, unsafe or in danger. Stage combat training gives you the knowledge base to know what is safe, so you can speak from a position of knowledge. It also is a huge advantage to gifted fight directors who can utilize your training to create some exciting violence.

I know some of the past winners of the Paddy Crean Award and they are all class individuals. They take their work seriously but also know how to enjoy what life brings them. They have a thirst for knowledge of their craft and have never been afraid to ask questions. They respect the teachers who have come before them and are always ready to learn something new.

If you are fortunate enough to be awarded this honor, know that those who have come before you have worked hard to gain their skill, have done it without a desire for personal triumph but instead in the pursuit of their craft (most of them didn't even know about the award, myself included). Although you may not have had the good fortune to meet the man for whom this award is named after, you are part of his legacy. You are also part of his legacy even if you do not win this award. The legacy is class, artistry, selflessness, hard work and respect for your craft. I was humbled to receive this award from Paddy's own hands and with that wonderful twinkle in his eye. His words still echo in my head. Do it with ZA! I strive to do that in all my work and I wish the best for all of you.

PHOTO BY A.C. WEARY

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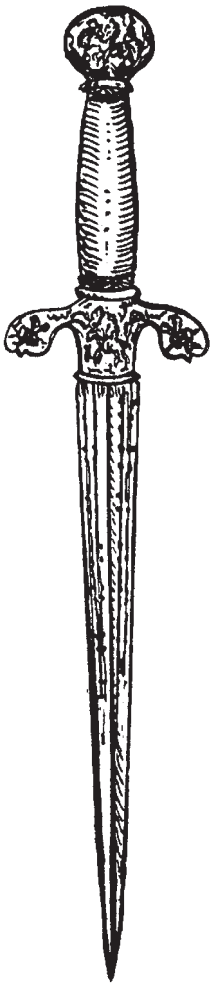

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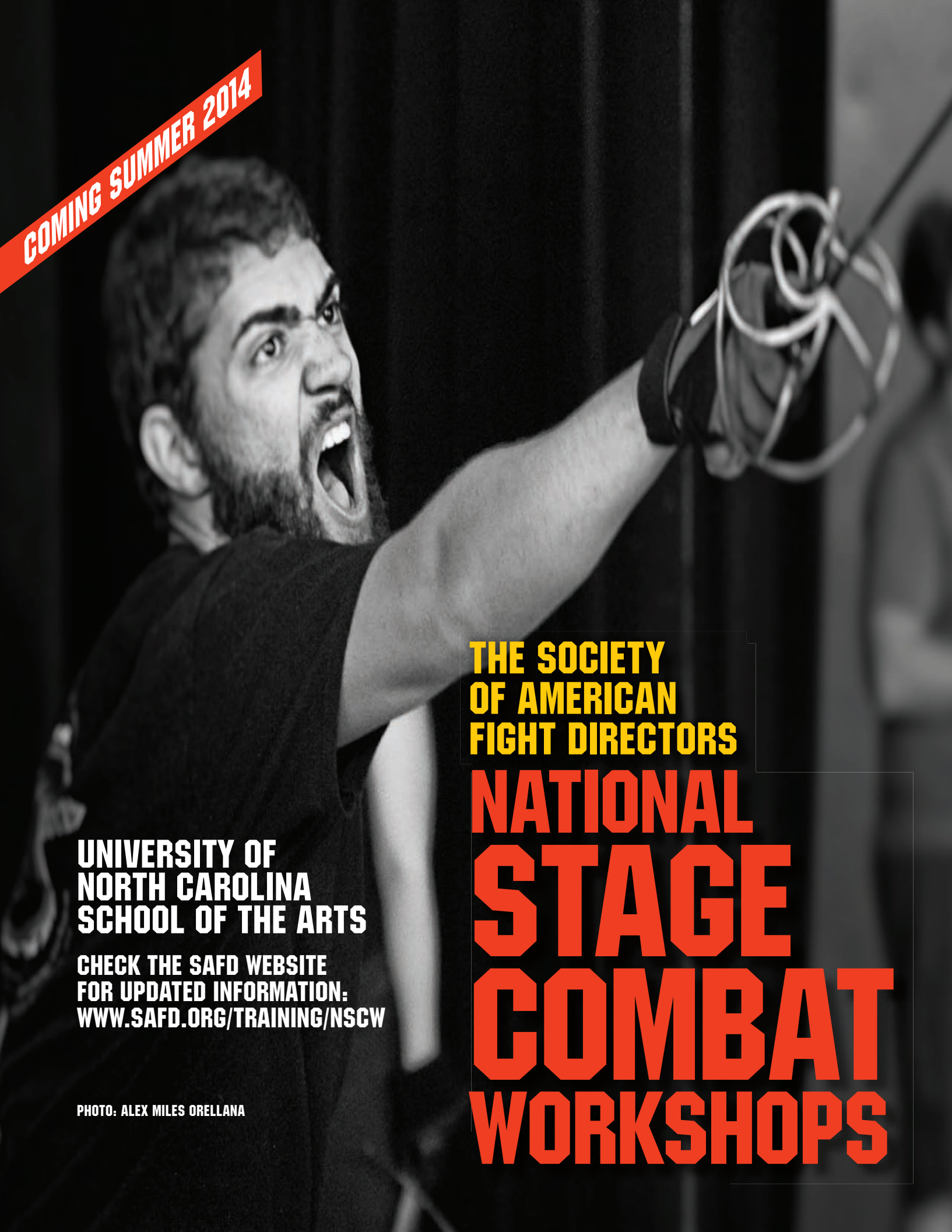
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