Fall 2016

The Fight Master, Fall 2016, Vol. 38 Issue 2

The Society of American Fight Directors

The FightMaster

Spring 2016 The Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

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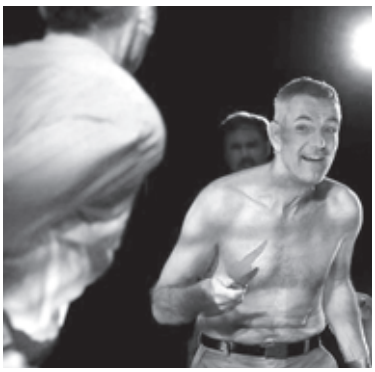
Features



Standards

Editorially Speaking

What was the first thing you learned in stage combat—footwork? The parts of a sword? A brief history lesson? Think back—did anyone explain what *violence* was? Probably not—violence is inherently understood, to the peaceful and aggressive alike. Yet we, as actors and choreographers, live in a strange limbo where we create safe violence. We are taught to go off-line, watch our thumbs, and those of us who know how to break wrists and smash bones are conditioned not to when it comes to our fight partners. To do this successfully, we must understand the nature of violence as it relates to our craft.

That sounds easy, and it is deceptively so, because each of us has a different interpretation of the fundamentals. For some, violence breaks the moral contract between individuals and sends us backwards. For others, humanity never truly moved forward, and violence is simply sewn into the nature of man. Neither of these points of view is wrong, though advocates would argue loudly for their side. Consider the first-time fighter who does not necessarily want to hit her opponent, or the male fighter who has been socially conditioned against hitting women. Compare them to the competitive fighter learning stage combat, not wanting to unleash the full power of an attack. How you understand violence impacts how you look at choreography. What is the basic level of a fight, and what determines a character's relationship to the core concept of being violent?

This Spring issue is all about basics. How do we, as choreographers, research the reason for a fight? How do we, as actors, find the motivation in a character to end the life of another human being? How do we, as performers, keep ourselves malleable and healthy so that we can play all the types of characters we wish? It is my hope that in reading these articles you take an opportunity to find your own fundamentals, and see where you stand. It is a healthy exercise, both in terms of understanding potential character motivations, as well as where to start when you look at piece of fight choreography.

The SAFD welcomes the newly elected members of the governing body, as well as the new regional representatives selected to keep the channels of communication running smoothly. We hope that you will continue advancing the goals of the SAFD, to get more theaters to recognize the need for skilled fight choreographers, and to encourage performers to improve their combat skills to ensure safe fights on stage. We also welcome the recently established Diversity Committee. This committee's purpose is to improve inclusiveness in the SAFD, and we wish them luck with this noble goal.

Be well. Fight well.

Jean A. Monfort, Editor
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The FightMaster

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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
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- Submissions must include any and all necessary supporting documentation (bibliographies, etc.)
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- 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:
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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.

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Contributors

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Randy Messersmith (AAC) is currently proficient in all eight SAFD weapon styles with Recommended status in six of them. He has been a professional actor, director, playwright, fight director, educator and producer for over thirty-six years. He is the co-founder of Southwest Shakespeare Company based in Mesa, Arizona, and served as its Artistic Director from 1992-1996. In 2006, he was hired as the Theatre Arts Director at Scottsdale Community College and currently teaches classes in Acting, Directing for Theatre and Film, Combat for Stage and Screen, Voice and Diction, Shakespeare, and Acting for TV and Film. He holds an M.F.A. in Acting/Directing from the University of Missouri, Kansas City.

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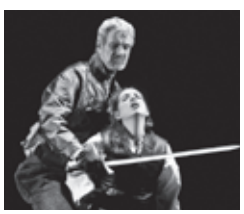
Danielle Rosvally is a 2015 Graduate Institute For Teaching Fellow at Tufts University and a project coordinator at the Folger Shakespeare Library. She holds a B.A. from New York University, an M.A. from Rutgers University, and is finishing her Ph.D. at Tufts University. In addition to her formalized education, she has also trained as an actor at the American Globe Theatre, The Actor's Institute, The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, The Royal Shakespeare Company, and Shakespeare & Company. She works as a fight director in Boston.

Eugene Solfanelli (AAC) has been a registered Advanced Actor Combatant and professional combatant and fight director since 2001. He has a MFA in Acting from Brooklyn College and a BA in Education from St. Joseph's College. A martial artist for over 25 years, he has been teaching stage combat at Brooklyn College since 2008, in the stage combat department at AMDA NY and stage combat workshops at Swordplay. He assists Joe Travers and Nathan DeCoux at Swordplay. More information available at: www.actorcombatanttraining.com

Joseph Travers (SAFD FD/CT) has been fight directing and teaching stage combat for over twenty-five years. Recent fight directing work includes the Broadway production of *Bronx Bombers* and the world premier of Billy Porter's *While I Yet Live* at Primary Stages. He teaches stage combat for the *Columbia University* MFA Acting Program, heads the stage combat program at *AMDA*, *NYC*, and is the Managing Director of *Swordplay*, NYC's longest running stage combat school.

Heidi Wolf (CT) is based in Seattle. Recent fight direction credits: the world premiere of *Red Earth*, *Gold Gate*, *Shadow Sky*, and a revival of *Kittens in a Cage*. Recent teaching credits: Cornish College of the Arts, University of Puget Sound, University of Washington School of Drama. Recent interview credits: "Stage Combat: Not Just a Man's Game" (Amarante, 2015). Recent performance credits: *Romeo and Juliet* (Seattle Immersive Theatre), and *Stage Combat Arts* (DuVal, 2016).

On The Cover



Randy Messersmith as Duke of York and Andrea Robertson as Joan of Arc in Southwest Shakespeare Company's *Blood Royal: An Original Adaptation of the Henry VI Trilogy* by Dr. Michael Flachmann. *Photo courtesy of* Larry Stone.

From Page to Stage
Script Analysis for Fight

ABOVE LEFT: Angel Veza and Eugene Solfanelli in Meron Langsner's production of Legacies in 2014.

ABOVE RIGHT: Meron Langsner's *Legacies* in November, 2014. The reading starred Michael Jerome Johnson, Eliza Orleans, Eugene Solfanelli, Robert Tuftee, and Angel Aguilar Veza. Director Lucy Gram.

LUCY GRAM

By Meron Langsner, PhD

What follows is a breakdown of one methodology of approaching a text as a fight director and/or a movement specialist. While it's obvious that the play must be read before any other work is done, what one is looking for when they read and how one's findings are utilized hasn't had a whole lot of public discussion. Like any other design discipline, fight directing begins with the text.

This is primarily a discussion of pragmatically applied dramaturgy (specifically what I have come to call "fightaturgy.") The goals are to be able to solidify the fight director's understanding both of how they might be of service in any given production, and also to be able to communicate with the director, production staff, and performers.

While reading the script, a fight choreographer must look for moments wherein they might expect to be of service and create a list for themselves of those moments with page, scene and line notations for reference. A modified version of this list should be prepared to present to the director so as to help guide the conversations that follow regarding how such moments will be composed and rehearsed. Some scenes in a script contain clear fight references and might include a stage direction that reads something like, "*she draws her sword, running at the bandits and dispatching three of them before facing off for a duel to the death with the bandit king.*" Others are less blatant and may be moments wherein a line of dialogue such as, "Stop that! You're hurting me!" might leave room for interpretation

& Pen to Sword
Directors

in the staging. I make a special point for looking for slaps and falls, as very often these can be overlooked, even though they cause safety and narrative issues if not addressed. Other, sometimes less obvious areas where the fight director might be called in include sex scenes, moments where weapons are handled but not engaged in combat, seizures/heart attacks, and people being transported under duress (such as prisoners being brought before judgment of some kind). These are often not "fight scenes" per se, but are moments wherein the fight director might be asked to "just take a look." It's better to be prepared for this ahead of time.

Identifying the moments in the script that will (or may) require attention is only the first step. One must also read for clues and references for how and why those scenes happen. A play may have a single slap as the only fight, but that slap is very likely an emotionally loaded movement based on other events in the play. To cite an example most will be familiar with, in Act II, Scene IV of *Romeo and Juliette*, Mercutio gives a disparaging account of Tybalt's fencing. This is both an opportunity for composing comic movement for that moment, and an indication of what might happen when the fight itself takes place later. Also important when reading the play and preparing for the subsequent discussion with the director is to get an idea for how emotionally intense the violence itself should be. One production may call for very disturbing gritty altercations, where another might be better served by more flashy choreography.

Additionally, I read for fightaturgy clues that are NOT related to any physical altercations, but add to character and narrative. This includes proper handling of prop weaponry, regardless of whether or not said props are used in a fight scene. I recommend collaborating with the costume and prop designers when you can. Examples where characters have weapons but do not directly use them include how the US Marines in *Bengal Tiger at the Baghdad Zoo* handle their rifles, or how any armed character in *The Mikado* might handle a sword should it be part of their costume. It is up to the fight director to handle these moments, even though they are less obvious.

Fightaturgy gets especially important with older texts, and plays that involve dueling traditions in any way (regardless of whether or not a duel actually takes place). Much of Elizabethan, Restoration, and Spanish Golden Age drama is full of references to dueling traditions. These are all elements that should go both into choreography decisions and be put on the radar of the director, dramaturge, and other production team members. It is not unlikely that the first or second read of a script will open up an avenue of research that the fight director will have to work on before getting to their first composition rehearsal.

Once I have read and analyzed the play, the document that I send the director is a notated list of scripted incidents of violence/movement, potential incidents of violence/movement that are not explicitly scripted but may add to the narrative, and notations of moments when the characters reference violent practices and might benefit from a dramaturgical note. I highlight which incidents I perceive as needing priority and/or greater intensity, as well as questions about props, costumes, and directions that the narrative might take because of the violence, or that might influence how the violence might be executed. Each piece is notated with the page/act/scene where it appears in the play, and may also include comments. The list I send the director is an edited version of the list I generate for myself, streamlined for easier understanding. This usually forms the basis for the next conversation I have with the director, regarding how they would like the fights to take shape, as well as serving as an aide to planning rehearsal and fight call times.

Like any other design discipline, fight directing begins with an analysis of the script. That analysis becomes the foundation for any work that takes place in the rehearsal room, and later, on the stage itself.

This article is adapted from a blog post on MeronLangsner.com from April 14, 2014

Fighting Over Fifty

Meditations on not getting down about getting gray

By Randy Messersmith

As an Advanced Actor Combatant with 26 years experience, studying off and on with Society of American Fight Directors and other martial arts disciplines, I vividly remember the beginning of my stage combat journey. In 1989, I attended my first NSCW in Las Vegas. I was 28 years old. Since then, I have experienced two knee surgeries, a broken thumb, osteoarthritis in the joints, corrective lenses, and a few extra pounds to carry around. At present, I am on sabbatical from my position as Theatre Arts Director and Residential Faculty at Scottsdale Community College in Arizona, taking the opportunity at the ripe old age of 54 to "take a break" and attend the 2015 National Stage Combat Workshop (NSCW) at the North Carolina School for the Arts.

In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, author Stephen R. Covey tells a story of a man who was walking through a forest who came across a frustrated lumberjack. The lumberjack was trying to cut

Opposite: Randy Messersmith (left) and Ed Baker (right) in rehearsal at NSCW 2015. Their quarterstaff fight received a "Best Scene" award.
Above: Winter Wonderland Workshop, 2014.

CRAIG LAWRENCE, FIGHT GUY PHOTOGRAPHY

down a tree with a saw and was swearing and cursing in frustration. When the man asked what the problem was, the lumberjack replied that the saw was blunt and wasn't cutting properly. The man suggested he stop and sharpen the saw to make the job easier, but the lumberjack said that he was on a tight deadline and he didn't have time to stop. (p.187) The story is metaphorical, of course, but the message is clear: if we do not take time out of our crazy, overcommitted lives to develop and improve our own skill sets–no matter how much experience we may have–we too will find ourselves sweating and grunting (and cursing) the symbolic trees. For the first time in many years, I am taking the time to have a seat on a stump and sharpen the saw.

Throughout my work at workshops across the country, I've taken time to reflect on age and how it affects my work as an actor combatant. In these "long thoughts" (as James Taylor likes to call them), some nagging questions keep popping up. Are we ever done earning our stripes? Do those of us with our AARP membership actually stand a chance at getting hired in this profession?

Mental Health

When I attended my first NSCW I was young, thin, and in relatively good shape from navigating the New York City life where I had been living since 1985. In high school, I played almost every sport: football, track, basketball, cross-country running, and swimming, all while participating as a member of the drama club. I thought I was immortal. Although the grueling schedule at NSCW, including 8-10 hours of fighting each day six days a week for three weeks took its toll, there still seemed to be plenty of time for alcohol consumption and late nights on the weekends and maybe even a weeknight or two.

Flash forward 26 years. I anticipate my approach to this NSCW will be wildly different, at least from a mental strategy. My goal is not only to survive the grueling schedule, but to thrive. For stage combat practitioners of any age there are four mental hurdles that I think we need to be aware of as we pursue this intrepid journey of practicing the Art of the Sword. The art of theatrical violence can be a very physically demanding discipline, but it is equally mentally demanding. Avoiding some of the pitfalls that sabotage the enjoyment

DEVON CHRISTOPHER ADAMS

Equivocation by Bill Cain at Southwest Shakespeare Company, 2015

of the journey, or even cause you to give up the practice, must be avoided at all costs.

First, resist the allure of the pinnacle, thinking "I've got this," or "I have arrived." Those of us who have had several years (or decades) of experience may feel at times that even though we still have more to learn, that perhaps an instructor is moving too slow or that too much time is being spent on basic techniques. We forget that the musician practices the scales *repeatedly* before she plays the concerto, and she does it every time. It creates muscle memory and dexterity. I remember receiving my 1st degree black belt in 2003 after ten years of study. I was incredibly proud of the achievement. I was 42—the oldest member of the dojo at the time. But as I was tying on my new belt with my name embroidered on it, I had an epiphany. *I had mistakenly made the black belt the goal, the culmination and final curtain.* I realized that the black belt was just the beginning of the journey. While having a goal and striving to achieve it gives me energy and purpose, I always try to remember the importance of mini-successes and failures along the way. This is something I share with my students all the time–the best learning takes place outside of our familiar comfort zones.

Second, it is important not to judge oneself too harshly. Watch out for statements of self-doubt, such as, "What am I doing here? This is a young person's profession!" While there is a certain amount of harsh truth to the reality of the young person's game, it is important to remember that there are opportunities in the industry that are available to older actors with up-to-date skill sets. Fight Masters work professionally with film actors or opera singers that have little to no training of any kind, and it is a welcome relief when a seasoned performer is cast in a play or a film that can safely handle a prop weapon.

Third, while there might not be as many roles out there in film and theatre for the "AARP/SAFD" actor, they do exist, and directors are looking for trained combatants to fill them. I was recently cast in Southwest Shakespeare Company's *Blood Royal*, a condensed version of the Henry VI trilogy, which had as many as thirteen individual fight scenes and over twenty-three moments of choreographed violence. I was involved in several of the scenes as the Duke of York, but because of my training I was asked by the fight director to throw on a tunic and appear as a soldier in several more. In the last three years, I have been in several productions that required staged violence of some kind, and I was cast because of my continual training. Age did not play as large a factor as I thought, because I kept up on my technique.

Finally, the last mental hurdle we encounter is to be accepting of our physical limitations that may have eroded our elasticity, stolen our speed and dexterity like a thief in the night, and created that beautiful *snap-crackle-pop* in our knee and ankle joints when we lunge. But it is imperative that we also celebrate our strength of will. This is my favorite definition about the difference between an amateur and a professional: an amateur artist performs well when they feel like it; a professional artist performs well whether they feel like it or not. It is this reliance on years of training and technique that pulls you through a performance in front of an audience when your bones are aching, your voice is hoarse, and you have just finished the eighth performance of the week. It is how the ballet dancer performs on pointe on her broken ankle, the Broadway musical theatre artist sings past her laryngitis, and how the professional fight combatant executes choreography with precision and excellent partnering skills, enduring bruises, sore muscles, creaky joints, and mental exhaustion.

One of the advantages that we of the Silver Hair clan might have over some of our younger and more athletic members of the SAFD fight family is our willingness to risk, to fail, and to be OK with failing. We just don't care what people think of us (at least, not as much as we used to). Our experience allows us to be able to work with a variety of fighters from the novice to the advanced and to meet them at their skill level without frustration. We are better partners than when we started because we are more relaxed, but mentally tougher. We work smarter, not harder. We conserve energy. We take naps.

We can remain mindful of some of these mental booby traps and avoid them by constantly working on the basics, seeking training in a variety of weapons styles and disciplines, constantly exploring new and innovative ways in fight choreography, and accepting and loving our current physical machine with all of its worn parts and mileage. In order for this machine to continue to be efficient and effective, we must first look at how to repair it and to keep it in good working order.

Physical Health

From *Younger Next Year*, by Chris Crowley and Henry S. Lodge, M.D. (2004)

> Nature balances growth with decay by setting your body up with an innate tendency toward decay. The signals are not powerful, but they are continuous, they never stop and they get a little stronger each year. Whatever you call it, in our forties and fifties our bodies switch into a "default to decay" mode, and the free ride of youth is over. In the absence of signals to grow, your body and brain decay, and you "age." So how do we keep ourselves from decaying? By changing the signals we send to our bodies. The keys to overriding the decay code are daily exercise, emotional commitment, reasonable nutrition and a real engagement with living. But it starts with exercise. (p.22)

The authors of this book advocate for some form of exercise at least six days a week. Not three days, thirty minutes a day, which may be the accepted minimum to maintain fitness for those under fifty years of age, but six days a week to help override the decay code and actually increase strength and stamina. If we look at the definition above, attendance at the NSCW and training in all forms of theatrical swordplay and martial arts disciplines contributes to all of the keys to overriding the decay code.

Another recommendation by the authors is for those of us over forty or fifty to do strength training at least twice a week (p. 155). Muscles atrophy as they get older, and it is never more important to hit the gym and lift those weights than it is as we age. Hate weight lifting? Too bad. The goal is not to audition for the Hulk. Cardio training, while very important, is not sufficient to override the decay code, even if you are in great shape from running or swimming. Lifting is therefore required to keep our muscles from getting "sloppy."

Then there is pain. It's a reality and there's no avoiding it. After three weeks at NSCW (or any workshop of length), the younger participants who may not have been in the greatest shape to begin with start to get stronger, whereas those of us with the older joints and muscles start to feel the effects of the ten-hour days. The recovery time for sore muscles is longer for older combatants, but there are things you can do to accelerate the process. Drink protein shakes containing almond milk, hemp protein, peanut butter, bananas and L-Glutamine, which counteract the hit your muscle-skeletal system takes after a hard day inflicting imaginary wounds and swinging about cold steel. The L-Glutamine, an amino acid, helps to speed up the recovery process by re-synthesizing carbohydrates, and helps to replace the glycogen reserves that have been depleted after a hard workout or a mass battle scene.

One of my absolute essential tools to assist in the recovery of sore muscles and to break down the lactic acid that has collected in them each day is a foam roller, the sort you can purchase from almost any department store, sports store or yoga studio. Foam rolling constitutes what is known as Self-Myofascial Release (SMR), and targets tired and overworked muscles and improves function, flexibility, and reduces injuries. If you are not using these in addition to your stretching regimen, I highly suggest you get one and stick it in your fight bag.

Another reality with which fighters of all ages contend are injuries. Not including surgeries, which are meant to help yet can create secondary problems, we all must handle our physical challenges. These include osteoarthritis, torn ligaments, knee, neck, back, and elbow pain, and general physical limitations based on one's body type. My personal bane is what I lovingly refer to as my "Hamlet Thumb." On an opening night of *Hamlet*, the actor playing Laertes missed his target in the final duel and tore three of the ligaments and tendons in my right thumb with his rapier. Since there was no understudy, I performed the remaining three weeks of performances with my hand wrapped.

Twenty-six years later, in rapier and dagger classes, I am not-so-gently reminded of my Hamlet Thumb by the constant throbbing of arthritis every time I perform a beat parry, or any parry for that matter. Accidents happen, of course, and there are many stories like this in our profession. The thing to remember is to be kind to yourself as you continue to study this demanding and rewarding art form. Accept your physical limitations, whatever they may be, with grace, dignity, pride, and with a grateful heart. I'm not advocating stopping training, or hanging up the sword in the face of injury. It's a matter of balance—keep working, but respect that the body changes as we age.

Food is fuel for living, and in our case, fighting. It is as the adage goes: "You are what you eat." I know this means that I cannot eat the same foods that I did in my twenties and have the same amount of energy or stamina. Nor do I want to eat the same foods that I ate when I was younger. While a discussion of diet and nutrition could encompass another article entirely, and I am not a professional nutritionist, I think it is important to remember that older combatants have different nutritional needs than our younger counterparts. Some of us have different metabolisms that burn fuel at a slower pace. Our bodies are complex machines that require the right combination of fuels to keep them running at peak efficiency.

I have found the switch to a plant-based diet of nutrient-dense whole foods to have considerably increased my energy levels.

Titus Andronicus (Messersmith in the role of Titus) at Southwest Shakespeare Company, 2013.

ERIC SALLEE

This can include substituting hemp protein for whey protein, and eliminating all dairy products and animal proteins (with the exception of salmon). In my own physical experience, I no longer have stomach pain or digestion issues, and I am no longer on any medications. I don't feel sluggish after meals, and I don't have to rely on caffeine in the afternoons to keep my energy level up during a ten-hour day of fighting or rehearsing for a production. I don't intend to brag, or to suggest everyone go and change his or her diet. I do say this–listen to your body. Only you can decide what kind of fuel to put in the tank before you run out of gas. The Art of the Sword is not a sprint for the actor, but an endurance race. We would do well to make sure we have made smart choices to get us to the finish line.

Spiritual Health

Thus far I've addressed the mental and physical challenges when navigating the aging process in the study of theatrical swordplay. I believe there is a deeper meaning that goes to the heart of why we practice this art form, and continue to practice it for many years. I would like to conclude by contemplating some of the deeper questions asked at the beginning of this article. Are we ever really done earning our stripes? Should we want to be? This discussion reminds me of a cartoon in *The New Yorker* magazine years ago. It depicted two Zen monks, one young and one old, who were sitting on the floor, cross-legged. The young monk is looking quizzically at the older monk, who has turned toward him to say: "Nothing happens next. This is it."

When we take on a task it is only natural that we desire some kind of result for our efforts. When we practice the art of mindfulness, we do not mean practice in the sense of rehearsing to get better and better so that a performance will go as well as possible. In my view, mindfulness simply means a mental state whereby we are continually present with experience, and without judgment.

Jon Kabat-Zinn, in his book, *Wherever You Go, There You Are*, describes it this way:

> Mindfulness practice means we commit fully in each moment to being present. There is no "performance." There is just this moment. We are not trying to improve or get anywhere else. We are not even running after special insights or visions. Rather, we are simply inviting ourselves to interface with this moment in full awareness, with the intention to embody as best we can an orientation of calmness, mindfulness, and equanimity right here and right now. (p. 22)

In Theatre there is a term–the *illusion of the first time*. A performance must give the audience the feeling of discovery. It asks actor combatants to fully commit in each moment to "being present." It is mindfulness. Our fight mentors have spent years and years training their minds, bodies and spirits in this pursuit. We aspire to the mental agility, the physical strength and flexibility, and the awareness of the deeper connections to humanity that the continued study of this art form brings. I find that practicing meditation for even five minutes a day helps to cultivate an appreciation for the present moment. It protects me from taking my life for granted, and my abilities as a given. Here is a simple 5-minute meditation practice:

Turn off the ringer on your phone. Set the timer for 5 minutes, so you won't be tempted to worry about missing appointments. Or, use calming music selections of 5 minutes in length if you prefer.

Sit in a comfortable position for you. Close your eyes and relax, and take a few deep breaths from your diaphragm to release the tension from your body.

Clear your mind of thoughts. When thoughts do enter your mind, gently acknowledge them and let them go, returning your focus to the present moment again.

Don't worry about "doing it right." This actually makes meditation more stressful. Thoughts may often enter your head; the process of redirecting your focus to the present moment is where the benefit comes.

We breathe naturally, preferably through the nostrils, without attempting to control our breath, and we try to become aware of the sensation of the breath as it enters and leaves the nostrils. This sensation is our object of meditation. We should try to concentrate on it to the exclusion of everything else.

Meditation can be used for short-term calming and long-term resilience. For best results, try fitting in longer sessions of 20 minutes twice a week and then you will be more practiced with meditation in general, then these 5-minute sessions will have more of an impact when you need them.

As a professional educator with 26 years experience, I have come to the realization that one of the reasons I find such joy in the study of theatrical violence is it allows me to be reborn daily in a new role. I am no longer the teacher, the giver, or the professor of wisdom. I am the student again. I have a passion for learning, and it is a path that I am on that will only end when that worthy opponent called time defeats me. It is about the journey, which at its core is not about trying to improve myself or get anywhere. It is to do this one thing simply for its own sake.

Epilogue

Two weeks have passed since the close of the 2015 NSCW. With elbow and knee braces, I stand victorious. My partner (also an AARP/SAFD combatant) and I received a Best Scene Award for our Quarterstaff fight. More importantly than any accolade, the mental, physical and spiritual lessons I received will last a lifetime. It has been said that there is no learning without reflection. As I look back on my experiences at the NSCW in the comfort of my own home, two things become painfully clear (pun intended).

First, the physical demands of the workshop far exceeded my preparations. By the third week my knees and right elbow were screaming at me to stop. At one point, my elbow would not allow me to pick up an aluminum broadsword, let alone one of steel. Instead of pushing through the pain (as I would have done when I was younger) and perhaps damaging myself further, I took a step back and sat out some classes and came back stronger in two days. I took great comfort in seeing I was not alone, as elbow and knee braces appeared on the younger participants as well. Also, Epsom salts will now be included in my fight bag along with the foam roller.

Second, I had an epiphany. As I mentioned, my fight partner at NSCW for knife and quarterstaff was about my age. The final morning of testing I was so sore I limped into warm ups to see him wrapping his ankle, which had become painfully swollen. While I was wrapping my elbow, we looked at each other and smiled. We knew two things: that adrenaline is a magical elixir of pain removal in performance, and that we had something going for us that our younger combatants did not. Age. Experience. The acting of the fight would be far more important than the physical fight itself.

We would just act as if we weren't in pain. We received Recommended Passes in both weapons.

I also discovered the meaning of momentum; with every workshop, class, certification test, book or article read, I am filled with more joy, determination and rejuvenation to relish the productive struggle for years to come.

The saw is sharp; bring on the trees.

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Francois Delsarte *and*

By Joseph Travers, FD/CT, SAFD

For the fight director, this might be a familiar scenario: a fight has been staged and rehearsed. The actors are reasonably comfortable with their movements, and execute them well. The work is almost complete. Yet here and there something is missing—an indefinable quality of gesture or posture that the fight director seeks, but the actor does not bring forth. Perhaps it is not quite clear to the fight director what this gesture or posture may be - it is merely apparent that it is not there. Try though the struggling fight director might, the actor cannot be coaxed into bringing forth exactly what is needed. Perhaps he or she has not the training to do so. The performer forgets or is not aware of the way to express - with body, hands, face, or voice - what is sought. The fight director (who must seek to bring to the table what the actor does not) tries several options that never quite work. The problem is never solved, and is finally forgotten. The fight reaches completion, but not fruition. It is good craft, but not *art*. It does not precisely convey the intended meaning or effect. It is not perfect.

Of course, perfection may be impossible—but it can still be sought. If only in those accidental moments when the precise right movement expresses so powerfully the essence of Romeo's rage at Tybalt, or Macbeth's despair and defiance of the man not born of woman, we are amazed at how expressive the body can be, how universal and effective its language. Since it is the body, and not the sword, that tells the whole story to the larger audience, our desire then becomes to learn this language, and make it speak beautifully and precisely to all. The learning, translating and teaching of this language of expression was the life's work of Francois Delsarte.

Francois Delsarte was born November 19th, 1811 in Solesmes, France, and died July 22nd, 1871 in Paris. He spent the better part of his life working to discover, codify and teach others the principles he believed governed all aesthetics, especially the expressive arts of singing and acting. So successful was he, so powerful were the principles he professed, that his scientific approach and exacting methods were indirectly responsible, in this country, for an increased awareness of the need for " physical culture," for the advent of formal acting training, and for the revolution now known as Modern Dance.

As seminal as it was, his work quickly became misunderstood, especially in America. It became equated with static gesture without content and with "statue posing"– things he in fact deplored. But kept alive by his most dedicated students, his ideas and theories were carried forward in the world of dance, and inspired the work of such movement pioneers as Isadora Duncan, Ruth St. Denis and Ted Shawn.

For us, the question becomes: can the ideas of this misunderstood 19th century Frenchman have bearing for our work now? Is it possible that his understanding of how movement and gesture can effect an audience, and of how specific and universal the language of the body can be, will help us to stage moments of physical conflict and turmoil more believably and powerfully?

Delsarte formulated the principles he discovered in terms of scientific "laws," the most important of which he called "the law of Trinity". Briefly, the effect of the law and its application through the body manifests in the interplay of three elements - the mental, emotional, and physical (or in Delsarte's words, "vital"). Each movement is an expression of the balance of these three. The body is divided into its vital, emotional, and mental zones:

Head: Mental
Upper Torso and Arms: Emotional
Lower Torso and Legs: Vital

Each zone is subdivided in a similar manner. The arm will serve as a simple example:

Upper Arm: Vital
Forearm: Emotional
Hand: Mental

The subdivisions continue. In reality of course, the manifestations of the qualities of emotion, thought, and vitality are subtler than it may sound from such a clinical division. This Delsarte understood well. Every movement expresses a balance of all three qualities. In looking at gesture and posture scientifically, Delsarte was able to show how knowledge of the specific qualities of each area of the body could make possible a tremendous range of physical expression. Just as knowing all possible chords in all possible keys gives the musician the power to play whatever he pleases, so Delsarte believed that the body could be played with as much variety and accuracy as music.

Delsarte arrived at his method of assigning qualities to various body zones and regions through a lifetime of observing people in a wide range of circumstances and noting their movements literally from head to toe. We need not take him at his word, however. Let us examine what organs are contained in the regions mentioned above, and what actions each performs:

the Language *of the* Body

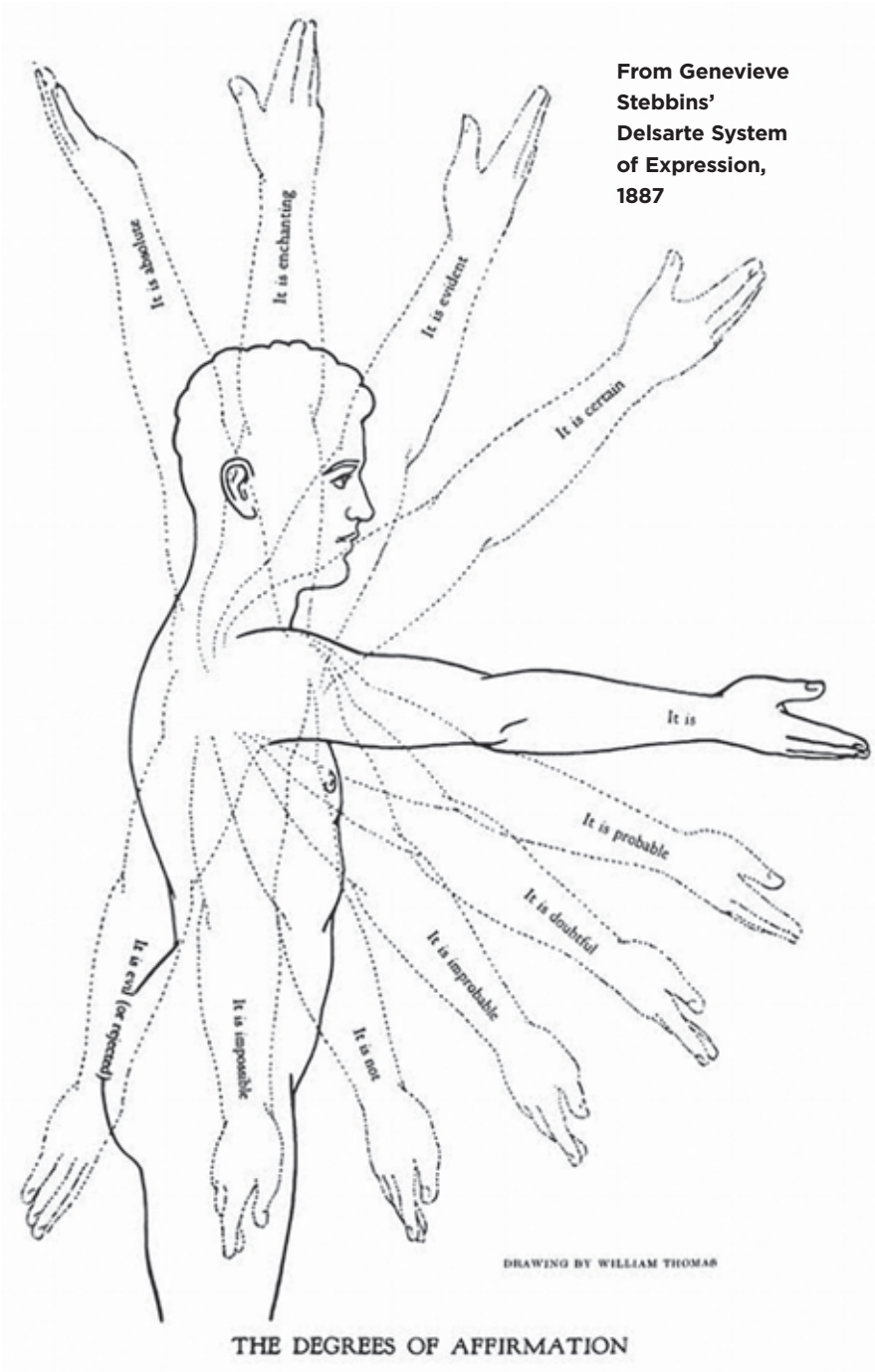
Francois Delsarte, 1864

Zone	Organs	Actions
Head (Mental)	Brain	Thought
Upper Torso (Emotional)	Heart and Lungs	Circulation of Blood and Oxygen (Warmth and Breath)
Lower Torso (Vital)	Viscera and SexualOrgans	Digestion, Procreation, Elimination
Legs (Vital)	Large Muscles and Supportive Bones	Standing, Walking, Running
Arms:		
Upper Arms (Vital)	Large Muscle Groups	Lifting, Carrying
Forearms (Emotional)	Mid -Sized Muscle Groups	Embracing, Holding
Hands (Mental)	Small Muscles	Operating Machines, Instruments, Repair and Manipulation

Interestingly, the expressive possibilities of specific parts and their subdivisions can be seen clearly by comparing relative sizes of muscles. The hand, for example, has its relatively large, mid-sized, and small muscles and also its vital (heel or thenar/hypothenar), emotional (palm), and mental (fingers) zones. Not surprising for one of the body's most expressive parts! Consider the difference in quality between the vital power of a punch and the raw emotion of a slap. Think about how the source or "root" of aggressive actions (as Maestro Suddeth says in his work, "from the groin," "from the heart," "from the head") is often delineated by the mass and size of muscle groups engaged.

Adding another dimension, compare these ideas with the use of some of the weapons with which we often work. Rather than quibble about the variety of ways any one weapon can be used, I've stuck to our common associations with how each operates:

Weapon	Associated with	Coming from	Quality
Broadsword	Large heavy cuts	Legs and Lower Torso	Vital
Rapier	Cuts and thrusts	Arms and Upper Torso	Emotional
Small Sword	Intricate point work	Wrist and Hand	Mental



From Genevieve Stebbins' Delsarte System of Expression, 1887

It is interesting as well to compare the development of these weapon forms through time (and their qualities) with the period characteristics of western civilization that we associate with their use:

Weapon	Quality	Period
Broadsword	Vital/physical	Medieval/ Dark Ages
Rapier, Rapier Dagger	Emotional/moral	Renaissance
Small Sword	Mental/ intellectual	Restoration/Age of Enlightenment

Delsarte maintained that the laws and principles he was formulating were universal – they explained and applied to everything. Why not apply them to the choice of weapons? Of course, such a choice is always the product of a number of factors – the play, design, production setting, etc. Nevertheless, Delsarte's system offers some enticing possibilities for our reflection. Through the framework of his system, we see these weapons as reflecting the social and psychological qualities of the periods with which they are associated.

Our modes of expression as choreographers include not only the movements of swords and bodies, but the dynamic relationship of the fight to the space around it. Delsarte's principles help to illuminate meanings in movements across the stage as well. He defines lengths as "passional" (emotional), heights and depths as intellectual, breadths as "volitional" (vital). In terms of movement across the stage:

Dimension	On Stage	Quality
Lengths	Directly upstage or downstage	Passional (Emotional)
Breadths	Right to left or vice versa	Volitional (Vital)
Heights and Depths	Vertical with respect to the floor	Intellectual

Diagonals are representative of conflict. Straight form is vital, circular form is mental, spiral form is moral or mystic.

Surely, some of these concepts described are not new to us. They are part of our training as directors, actors and choreographers. But their origins may indeed be the work of Delsarte. As choreographers, we borrow much from the world of dance. American modern dance was built on the principles of Delsarte, through the work of pioneers like Ted Shawn and Ruth St. Denis. The concept of formalized training for actors in America, as well as the country's first real drama schools, were organized by Steele Mackaye, founder of what became the American Academy of Dramatic Art, Delsarte's only American pupil, and the man Delsarte himself named the heir of his studies.

Even if we know some of these ideas, we may employ them rarely, and perhaps sometimes wrongly. In his book *Every Little Movement*, dance pioneer Ted Shawn insists that Delsarte's principles mean that the body's movements are always expressing something whether we intend it or not. He points out that often choreographers who wish to communicate a particular message or meaning actually express the opposite through ignorance or misuse of these principles and ideas.

The advantage in reaching back to the source of these ideas lies not only in acknowledging where these principles came from, but in having the original principles with which to work. It is then possible to clarify their true content and meaning and to apply them directly to our work in fight direction. There are many more principles and details to explore, the result of a lifetime of work by Delsarte, as well as expansions from Steele Mackaye, Genevieve Stebbins, Ted Shawn, and others. Study of these ideas can only help to broaden our means of expression and our ability as artists and teachers to tell our audience stories filled with meaning and clarity.

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STAGE COMBAT PHYSIQUE

THE SHAPE OF THINGS TO COME

By Eugene Solfanelli

"I hated every minute of training, but I said, 'Don't quit. Suffer now and live the rest of your life as a champion!!"

—Muhammad Ali

Some of the physical qualities that a successful stage combatant should posses are: advanced footwork, balance, coordination, agility, explosiveness (especially in Act V), strength, endurance, static strength (hold that shield in place, please), and movement allowance. These physical skills can be developed, nurtured, and cultivated through time and consistent, hard effort. How you train prior to the audition will separate you from the competition and help you get cast. Your weapon skills and your body's physical limitations will determine if you book that stunt job, play Cyrano, Zorro, or Tybalt.

This article is an introduction into the workout tools, exercises and training methods that I have found beneficial to the stage combatant, and

culminates in a workout guide that is easy to follow and adjustable to various physical levels. My focus is to create a training methodology that will establish a strong foundation for physical athleticism needed to be a better overall stage combatant working in the professional world. This is Stage Combat Physique and we are training for the shape of things to come!

My training journey spans 25 years of martial arts practice as well as eight years as a certified personal trainer. About 10 years ago, I began cross training outside of my martial arts classes in order to improve my martial arts skills. The exercises I thought would make me stronger (bench presses, back rows, shoulder presses, bicep curls, skull crushers and dips with free weights) led my body in the wrong direction. My body became bulky and slow with a limited range of motion, diminishing my martial arts and stage combat skills greatly, two skills I connect often. Sure I was stronger, but this strength was not functional; I hadn't gained strength in the craft that I was seeking to improve. I concluded that this new 'shape' and physical result was not conducive to my goals and that I needed to change my workout methodology to find both the functional strength I sought that complimented the other physical skills applicable to both my martial and stage combat needs. It wasn't until I became a certified MMA strength and conditioning coach that I found a possible option through MMA cross training.

Originally designed to develop the skills of the professional martial arts fighter, MMA cross training can be easily adapted to the needs of the stage combatant, which in my opinion are often the similar. When you look at an MMA fighter, their training encompasses working on specific martial arts skills (boxing, Brazilian Jiu Jitsu, wrestling, judo, etc.) while also doing a cross training program which enhances their physical foundation that pushes their martial arts skills to new heights. As a parallel, if we consider the eight Skills Proficiency Test weapons as an equivalent to the martial arts that an MMA fighter studies, the correlation between cross training to enhance physical skills with the development of martial weapon applications becomes evident. Now, obviously MMA and stage combat seek different results, but with the need to develop a similar set of physical skills, it is possible to devise a training methodology where the knowledge from one will benefit the other.

My favorite proponent of MMA Cross Training was Bruce Lee. According to legend, Bruce was challenged to a famous fight, which turned into a chase around Bruce's dojo. Bruce finally got his opponent to submit but not without getting winded and exhausted in the process. The epiphany that resulted from this event was that he needed to improve his conditioning, as his martial arts training alone would not be enough. He needed to find a way to win the fight quicker and limit potential variables of a longer fight, variables such as one's own strength and conditioning decreasing over time, the discovery or use of a weapon by the enemy or the arrival of additional opponents, which would result in defeat (this was the conceptual birth of Jeet Kun Do).

Fast-forward forty-five years, we will now look at the different cross training tools and exercises that can help you develop your physical foundation and improve your stage combat skills. For the purposes of this article, I will focus on three options I have found helpful: the kettlebell, jump rope, and body weight exercises. Please note that these are exercises that I have found to be beneficial, but consult a physician before attempting any new training regimen.

Kettlebell Training

The kettlebell originated in Russia when athletes began training with cannonballs in order to increase their overall body strength. The

addition of a handle to the cannon ball added more control and versatility, eventually resulting in the modern version of the kettlebell. Kettlebells lend themselves to versatile workouts and the multiple benefits: an individual can get a whole body workout (strength and cardio training, increased mobility and full body/muscle coordination, and no impact on joints from repeated usage) in a relatively short period of time. It is also an inexpensive piece of equipment that takes up little space.

How does the kettlebell address stage combat skills? First, it corrects any strength imbalances. Imagine the ability to work with strength and stability on both sides of the body: how would that impact a stage combatant's sword and shield skills, broadsword technique, or quarterstaff work? Think what this could do for unarmed work, as a combatant has to grapple, strike, or block with their non-dominant side. The stage combatant will also develop strength at an extreme range of motion. The further one reaches away from the body the weaker they become. Throwing a cut with a heavy broadsword puts our body in a weak position, as the guard moves away from our core center and towards our opponent. Incorporating kettlebell training increases strength and stability, making every cut stronger and improving targeting skills, critical with any heavy weapon.

Kettlebell training will also increase endurance, which is crucial when, for example, the actor combatant needs to play the Scotsman and have *the* fight against MacDuff at the end of Act V. The body will also learn how to absorb force. Imagine preparing the body, through kettlebell training, to absorb every shield impact, every broadsword clash, every fall and grapple exchange. The stage combatant will also develop dynamic resilience. Every cut, parry, block, or attack has negative effects on joints. Kettlebell training strengthens the joints, ligaments and tendons, which will protect them from the strenuous activities that stage combat (or life for that matter) will subject them to. Muscle coordination will also increase. As we swing the kettlebell with each different exercise, the body's ability to control and coordinate it through its range of motion will also increase. More muscle coordination means better control throughout any weapon and/or shield movement. This additionally develops upper and lower body muscle coordination. The chain link between the hands and feet here are the focus as each lower body pass, advance or retreat will be better coordinated to each parry, cut or thrust.

LEFT: The starting position for kettlebell exercises

ABOVE: Proper body position for the mid-way clean jerk exercise.

OPPOSITE: Eugene Solfanelli, along with the equipment necessary for both physical strengthening and stage combat

Moving on, there is the development of the core and posterior chain (hamstring, glutes, lower back) that will make us more explosive and dynamic with movement. With the lower body, development from kettlebell training results in lower, wider, and stronger en garde positions. I've personally noted how not only have my stances gotten lower, but I'm comfortable at that lower placement, using less muscular effort, which has increased my endurance with the extra energy reserve. I have also developed much more mobility in my stances. Lastly, kettlebell training enhances grip and forearm strength. Grip strength is especially improved, as the kettlebell swings through exercises and one must have a combination of squeeze and release so that it can swing. What a great way to develop hand and finger fluidity in one's grip that is essential to all of our sword and weapons work!

Olympic power lifting using a kettlebell (cleans, clean and jerk, and snatches) is a great avenue to the improvement mentioned above, but there are a great number of exercises with the kettlebell that one can do, regardless of body type. When working with a kettlebell, make sure to start at a low weight in order to assess how your body adapts to the training. Remember: starting with weight that is too heavy may cause injury.

Examples of these exercises are readily available in both print and online sources. Some specific kettlebell exercises for the stage combatant are:

Kettlebell Swing
Kettlebell Clean/Jerk
Kettlebell Snatch
Kettlebell Squat
Kettlebell Lunges
Kettlebell Dead lift

Jump Rope Training

The second type of training I would offer to the stage combatant is jump rope training. Inexpensive to own and requiring little or no space to store, this longtime staple of boxing conditioning has many health and physical benefits to the stage combatant. Specifically, hand and feet coordination increases the body's ability to coordinate our upper and lower body movements. Jump rope training works on the speed of movement within that coordination, whereas kettlebell training focuses more on the upper and lower body coordination of the traveling, sending, and absorbing of weight. The development of agility, quickness, footwork and endurance, in my opinion, makes a great actor combatant or martial artist.

It's important to look at ourselves like a pyramid, with our core strength being the foundation that supports us. One's mobility, quickness, lower body stability, and coordination gives one a supreme advantage in the field. Developing endurance is also vital for those long mass battles. Jumping rope is a great way to develop these attributes. It also strengthens the heart and develops one's cardio conditioning and lung capacity/strength. Starting this training is simple enough: coordination must occur first before one can experience the training effect of jumping rope. After getting accustomed to the rope, attempt to train with 30 seconds on (jumping), 30 seconds off (rest) in sets of 3 to 5 (times). Remember both intervals can be adjusted based on individual health and fitness level. Don't be afraid to raise or lower either based on body response and skill level.

Body Weight Exercises

A third workout style that is beneficial to the stage combatant and compliments the aforementioned exercises is body weight exercises. By this I mean exercises that only use the body's weight as resistance, without any additional equipment (as an added benefit, these exercises can therefore be done anywhere at no cost).. As opposed to free weight exercises, which isolate individual muscle groups, these exercises have the added benefit of being much more demanding of core strength and usage. Body weight exercise movements are easier on the joints and will protect you from chronic injuries. The direct effect of these exercises is the ability to manipulate one's body weight with greater ease. What could be better for the stage combatant than to raise his/her ability to

manipulate their body weight with more strength, power and efficiency? With this type of development stage falls become easier. Going down to the ground and up again becomes quicker and more efficient. Developing more core strength in motion and the posterior chain decreases the effort required to manipulate a sword and shield or broadsword. This is the stage combat definition of functional fitness. Body weight training develops the overall body strength, power, muscular and cardiovascular endurance, speed, balance, coordination, and flexibility (Lauren 9-10). Now, there is a long list of these types of exercises that exist under the umbrella of body weight exercises. For the sake of efficiency, I want to offer two exercises that will focus on enhancing the stage combat skills listed above.

Squat Thrusts—A squat thrust is an exercise in which the hands are kept on the floor with the arms held straight while the legs are straightened out behind and quickly drawn in towards the body again. Similar to mountain climbers, this is another excellent

ABOVE: Developing a stronger frame allows for a more confident presentation of weapons and better endurance for scene work.

OPPOSITE ABOVE: The starting position the body weight exercises

OPPOSITE BELOW: Proper body position for the mid-way squat thrust and burpee exercises

exercise to develop overall body strength and coordination, lung capacity, endurance and the posterior chain.

Burpees—A burpee is a squat thrust that ends in a standing position. For the stage combatant, the burpee provides overall body strength and coordination as well as the needed development of the important posterior chain for explosiveness. It will also strengthen your cardio endurance as well as increase lung capacity

The following simple yet comprehensive workout program is geared toward improving the stage combatant's physical condition. However, when an individual is not used to regular physical exercise, I recommend starting at a basic level to assess how the body will react to the workout. Difficulty variables can then be adjusted based on that assessment.

Jump Rope–30 jumps
Kettlebell Swing-10 reps
Jump Rope–30 jumps
Squat Thrusts–10 reps
Jump Rope–30 jumps
Kettlebell Clean/Jerk–10 reps
Jump Rope–30 reps
Kettlebell Snatch–10 reps
Jump Rope–30 jumps

It is important at the beginning to allow the body to rest in between each set and only move onto the next exercise when physical energy has been restored. As the trainee gets accustomed to this type of regimen, the body will recover quicker and will allow itself to move onto the next exercise with less rest time.

Organization is just as important as the exercises listed. The pattern of exercise/rest/exercise/rest is an attempt to prepare the body to function a certain way. Think about the physical rhythm patterns associated with stage combat. Physical effort on stage is not constant as in a marathon; it has a start/stop/start quality to it. As with boxing, MMA, or a wrestling match, the stage combatant needs to be able to go from zero to one hundred and back to zero again in the blink of an eye. The physical rhythm pattern of stage combat performances should be the goal of all training and preparing. If the actor combatant is working on a show and understands the physical rhythm pattern that exists in it, he or she can feel free to create a workout pattern that matches the physical rhythm found in the show. Trust me, with this type of physical training and body education the body will be better for it.

With the development of strength and increase in cardio comes better performance results overall. Also, as the trainee gets more advanced, many things can be altered to make the regimen more challenging. Time the entire workout, with the goal of lowering the recorded time every session. And, within the framework above, if a combatant needs to work on a specific physical skill, the exercises can be swapped out and new ones plugged in that will focus on specific needs. For example, taking out squat thrusts and replacing them with push-ups (plyometrics or regular) focuses on upper body strength. Adding an extra work out day a week can be another way to enhance the challenge. And there are a host of variations when using the jump ropse that can raise the difficulty if you need more of a challenge there (see double unders, walking the jump rose, etc.).

The workout should be done two to three times a week in order to have ample rest days between workouts. Resting is very important because it is during the rest period when the body will heal, grow and develop.

The workout program I've detailed is a great way to address the stage combat physical skills mentioned at the beginning of the article. Overall, the goal is to develop functional strength to enhance stage combat capabilities. Remember, knowledge is only the beginning. You will need hard work, dedication and focus to improve the physical skills needed to be a better stage combatant. Without developing strength, balance, stability, and control, how can you confidently be safe and take care of a partner? Without mobility, endurance and energy reserves in the tank, how effectively can you tell the physical story that will reflect the sword mastery of Tybalt, Cyrano, or the legendary blade of Scaramouche.

If nothing else, I hope that this article will spark interest in searching for supplemental training methods that can enhance the stage combat craft. My suggestions are only a few of the many options available, but I hope they might challenge you to be more physically engaged as a stage combatant and work toward the shape of things to come! Now that is Stage Combat Physique!

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When "It's Fine" Means It Isn't

How we can talk around our egos

BY ANDREW PEREZ

"So, what do I do when the other actor *actually* starts shaking me?"

This is probably not an unfamiliar question if you've taught or taken more than one class on stage combat, but that doesn't mean that it ever becomes an easier one to answer. Every actor brings to the table a unique set of skills, personality, energy, and ability. They also bring a different levels of predictability, consistency, and etiquette. Whether that level is high or low depends entirely on the actor, and can almost never be anticipated without getting the inside scoop on them from someone who's worked with them before.

"Oh [name deleted]? Yeah, he's one of those, 'I was just in the moment, bro!' types of guys."

The problem here isn't the rampant disregard for the need for trained, professional fight choreographers in any show with any amount of violence. Nor is it the callousness with which many directors treat sequences of stage combat. It's the lack of communication across the board on stage and on set that sets up this personality conflict.

So what do you do when the other actor is actually shaking you? When your director doesn't understand the need for safe, trustworthy, and comfortable conditions in a stage fight; when your choreographer asks too much of you and suggests you just get out there and take your licks; when your fellow actor is just "in the moment" night after night, what *do* you do?

There are a few resources I have encountered via the various "day jobs" I've held which have become touchstones for me both in and out of performance and rehearsal. One is the widely renowned Bonnie Gillespie (casting director, author, coach, and all-around champion of self-management). In an interview with a student reporter from her Alma Matter, the University of Georgia, she was asked what kind of mindset it takes to be successful in Hollywood. Her response? "You have to have high self-esteem and low ego."[1] In other words, you have to believe in the work you do and believe that you have what it takes, but you can't be constantly searching for validation or recognizable benchmarks at every turn. Believe in yourself, but don't turn around and demand recognition for every moment you're performing.

What does that mean when it comes to staying safe in a stage combat scenario? I firmly believe it means openly and honestly communicating with your partner, director, choreographer, and stage manager about what you need to both stay safe and tell the story effectively. One of the most detestable and dangerous sentences in the English language that I hear uttered far too often is: "It's fine. I'm fine." If your partner is actually shaking you (or hurting you in any way) night after night, you've got to communicate with them politely and respectfully that the way that they're performing that move is causing you pain and that you'd like to work it in isolation with the fight captain, stage manager, choreographer, or whomever your designated safety net happens to be. Real world confrontation can be difficult, because we are constantly mindful of the self-esteem vs. ego challenge. Not only that, we've dealt with our partner's negative responses when they feel like we're saying "you're doing it wrong."

So how does one avoid firing up the ego of one's partner? The resource I find most useful is Stephen R. Covey's *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.[2] In his book, he outlines a clear strategy for effectiveness in business and life. His fourth and fifth habits are "Think Win/Win" and "Seek First to Understand, Then to be Understood," respectively. In brief, thinking "win/win" means to find the option that will let everyone be the victor in any kind of deliberation (even fixing a challenging moment of fight choreography). To do so, one must "seek first to understand, *then* to be understood," which piggybacks on a great concept from Winn Claybaugh's book *Be Nice (Or Else!): and what's in it for you*[3] called "Go in asking." Essentially, rather than assuming that your partner or director or choreographer is wrong and telling them so, ask for the chance to understand their side before making any judgments.

To your choreographer: "Is it necessary that he do this slap full-contact?"

Andrew Joseph Perez and Scott Divine walking through a fight at a stage combat class at Big Idea Theatre.

To your director: "Would it be possible to set aside ten minutes of rehearsal time this week to set this bit of violence?"

To your partner: "How'd you feel about the fight last night?"

You'll likely be surprised by the responses you'll get, and it will help to keep your partner's or director's defensive ego from flaring up. If you can avoid that tension by going in asking, then you will likely find a win/win scenario where both parties get what they need. You protect yourself (after all, having high self-esteem does mean that you put your own safety first and foremost), the audience still gets to experience the full story, and no one's ego gets riled.

Is all of that easy? Will you nail it the first time you try and every time after that? No. But like anything, the first thousand times are the hardest and it gets easier every time. It takes practice, but communicating openly is essential to keeping yourself safe, your partner safe, and the audience happy. (I won't even get into the audience's sudden disconnect from the play when they sense that the actors themselves, rather than the characters, are in danger in a fight!)

Putting it to the Test

Whenever I'm choreographing or captaining a play, or even when I'm simply a day player stuntman, I strive to understand the common language of the other performers who are involved with the sequences of violence. If there is no common language, or if I'm choreographing and it's up to me to set it, I set it very clearly from the first minute.

I'm a big fan of the tried and true "Prep, Set, Play" model of building a sequence. I'm also a huge fan of the version of calling "hold" I was first introduced to in Fight Master Dale Girard's class at the NSCW in 2012: it doesn't matter what the safe word is, if anyone in the room shouts the specified word, everyone stops right where they are, shouts it back, and waits.

But let's be honest, a lot of the time we're on low-or-no-budget film sets, we're in garage theaters, and we're working for copy/credit and some new reel material or a resume booster. So when there isn't a union there to protect you, and there isn't someone specifically hired to manage the safety and storytelling of the violence, it gets tricky.

That being said, whether you're at the Lincoln Center or in your college drama director's home garage, the same philosophies of win/win, going in asking, and "seeking first to understand then to be understood" apply. If you can allow yourself the permission to take care of yourself (as Fight Master Mark Guinn so eloquently once put it to me, "If it hurts, don't do it."), and you take it upon yourself to open those communication lines rather than hiding behind "It's fine, I'm fine," then you can keep yourself safe from being "actually shaken."

How about when the director of the play has "*a vision for this fight*?" Not to disparage visions; I'm all for a director having a clear and well-thought-out vision. But every now and then, you get a director with some ludicrous idea that you know can't possibly work. What then? B.H. Barry tells a wonderful story in "Fights For Shakespeare: Book One: Romeo and Juliet"[4] wherein the director wanted Mercutio to be bitter and crippled by a limp until when, in tech, said director decided to cut the idea. Well, the fights had been choreographed around it so, as Barry says it, he "went home thinking evil thoughts about killing directors who could not make up their minds. The next day I re-choreographed and my solution was to wound Mercutio in the leg on the first pass. The bigger the problem the better the answer!"

In a somewhat more outlandish but certainly less last-minute instance, I was choreographing a "King Lear" wherein the director had Goneril and Reagan fight onstage, a fight which would culminate with Goneril killing Reagan and then herself. Very fun, very exciting, except the director wanted us to somehow (not kidding) find a way for Goneril to break a wine glass and shove the pieces of glass down Reagan's throat to kill her. That one was easy to nip in the bud (and the fight turned out to be wonderfully brutal in spite of not slicing our actress' esophagus to ribbons). In the end, I went in asking. I asked, "What is it about the glass down the throat that you like?" It turned out he wanted the notion of poisoning her wine,

The cast of Romeo and Juliet at Sacramento Theatre Company, directed by Barry Wisdom, 2014

but he wanted it to be far more gruesome. After a longer series of questions and answers with him, it turned out that a few brutal hits back and forth and some simple strangulation was sufficient to satiate his sensational interpretation of the scene.

B.H. Barry's story is a perfect example of the win/win that Covey is talking about. The director got to try Mercutio's limp all the way until he realized it just wouldn't work for the story they were telling, and Barry didn't have to re-block the entire fight from scratch during tech. And with my *Lear*, all I had to do was be willing to go in asking rather than offending the director and kindling his ego by telling him that his idea wouldn't work before we'd even entertained it. That simple act opened the conversation and allowed us to find the win/win for the show, actors, and the director's vision.

Perhaps the most challenging experience is when the project is your baby, when you've got ownership and it means something to you personally. If you're the director, choreographer, and in the show or film as well, for instance. As difficult as it is, you must keep yourself in mind and continue to find the win/win, even if it means sacrificing some of your own vision for the sake of your safety. It is easy to see a danger to someone else and prevent or correct it, but I find that most people are more likely to fall into the "It's fine. I'm fine" trap when they themselves are the ones in danger. It is a lot easier to just "take your licks" when you're the only one it affects.

But even –especially!– in that situation, it is vital that you take the time to have the conversation with yourself, and that you go in asking, "What is it from this scene that I want, and how else can we achieve it without getting legitimately hurt?"

Communicating at this level can feel unnatural for some, but the more you practice it, the better at it you can become, and the easier it will get. So often in the theatre, and especially on set, we are expected to just get out there and do it, but if we make a concerted effort to be proactive, and appropriately and professionally communicative, we'll not only keep ourselves and our coworkers safer, we'll lead by example and show the rest of the cast and team how much more can be accomplished with an open line of communication.

Endnotes

1 Gillespie, B. (2010, April 5). High Self-Esteem, Low Ego. Retrieved December 12, 2015, from http://bonniegillespie.com/blog/high-self-esteem-low-ego/

2 Covey, S. (1989). The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. New York, NY: Fireside.

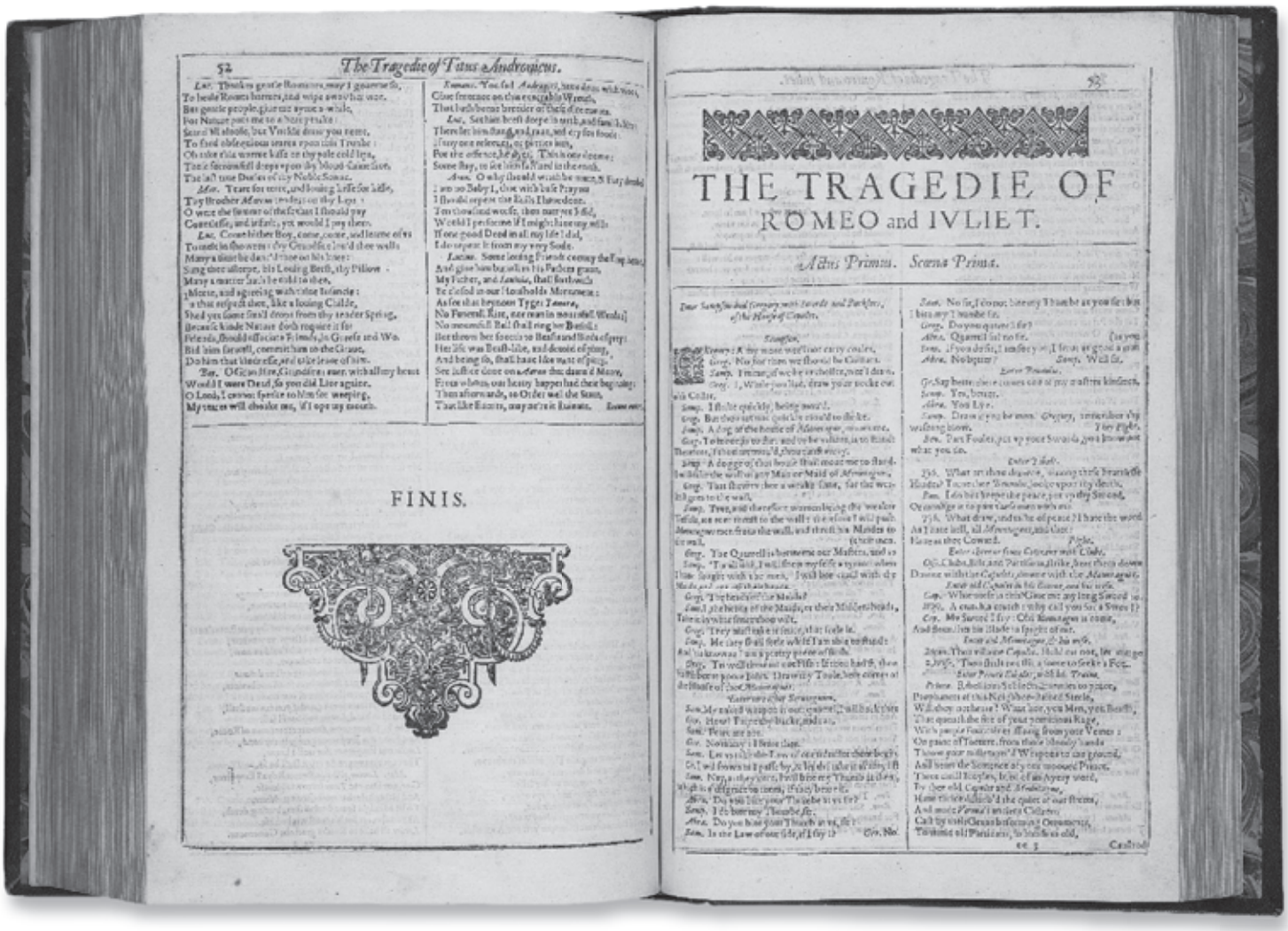
3 Claybaugh, W. (2004). Be Nice (Or Else!): And what's in it for you. Laguna Beach, CA: Von Curtis Publishing.

4 Barry, B. (2010). Fights for Shakespeare, Book One, Romeo and Juliet. B.H. Barry.

Reading Romeo

A Research Guide for *Romeo and Juliet*

By Danielle Rosvally



So, you've been asked to fight direct *Romeo and Juliet*. Statistically speaking, it had to happen sooner or later. The play has been performed so much that it's almost a cliché unto itself; a staple of high school theatre, regional Shakespeare companies, and truly any institution that fancies itself "cultural" while simultaneously wishing to appeal to an audience of romantics. Approaching *Romeo and Juliet* can be as daunting for the FD as it is for the actors. The self-same reasons why we feel so sick and tired of talking about *Romeo and Juliet* make it difficult to work on; it has a (almost too) rich performance history that spans hundreds of years and thousands of geographic locations. There's a high likelihood that the majority of your audience has seen the show at least once before and thereby has already drawn their own conclusions about it. Perhaps worst of all in terms of story telling: the audience already knows how it ends. Your job, as the fight director, is to tell a riveting, compelling, physical story *the audience already knows intimately* and to make it fresh, exciting, and surprising.

I first became explicitly concerned with the matter of *Romeo and Juliet* during a 2006 trip to the archives of the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust in Stratford Upon Avon. I was conducting research on the violence as staged in Trevor Nunn's 1976 production (starring the then young-and-fresh-eyed Ian McKellen in the role of Romeo). Ever since, I have had my eye on *Romeo* through my work as a scholar, as well as my work as a Fight Director. Over the course of my actor training at such institutions as Shakespeare & Company (Lenox, MA), The Actor's Institute (New York, NY), and the American Globe Theatre (New York, NY) as well as my years in the academy completing an MA and a PhD, I've kept a finger to the pulse of the textual issues that surround *Romeo*'s swordplay. Over the years I've found that my experiences on all three fronts (as scholar, fight director, and actor) have been vital to approaching Shakespeare on any one of them; and each lend their own dimension to the issues at hand.

So where do you start? As theatre-makers, we are drawn to these theatrically impossible tasks. Before you begin researching, you're going to want to go over the "usuals" with your director. In addition to the questions of rehearsal time, actor training, and the more practical aspects of fight direction, you'll want to get on the same page with the director as to the larger issues that will deeply affect your research process: is the production set in "period"? How closely is the production adhering to a "period" or "original practice" performance style? For what type of audience are you performing? The answers to these questions will inform not only the type of research, but also the amount of reading that you'll need to do. For a strictly period production meant for educational theatre, you're going to need to do a lot more historical preparation than for a production simply attempting to capture a general period "flavor."

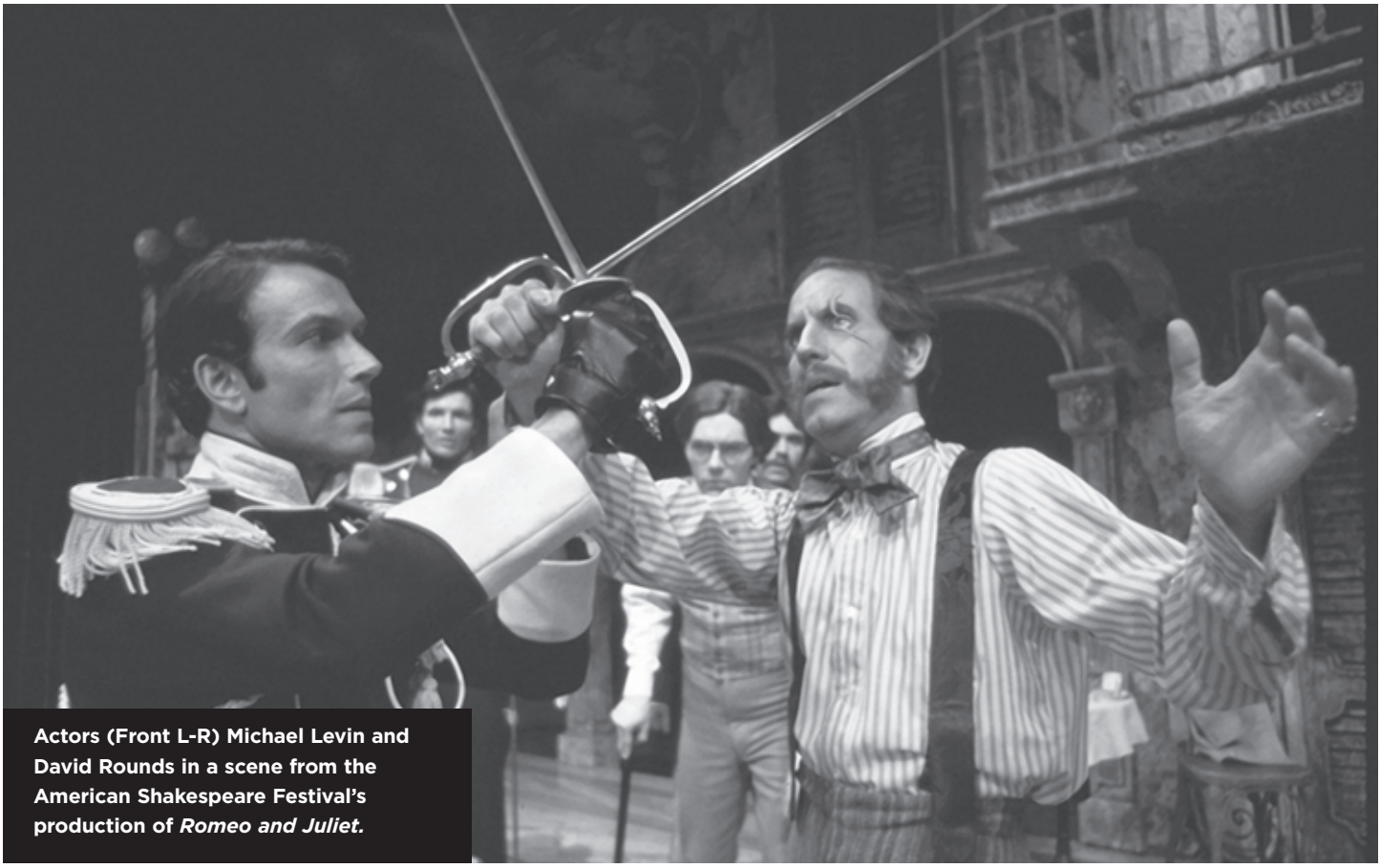
Now is the time to think deeply about your research. There is always the danger that if you do *too much* reading, the history will stifle the fight. While informing yourself about the basic necessities of period sword-craft is a smart move for the savvy FD, there will come a point when enough is enough. In essence: you will want to do just enough research that you have the *facts* to adhere to the world of the play, but not so much reading that the world of the play chokes your creative process. A dramaturge can be a huge resource for this. Since the dramaturge's job is to know everything pertaining to the play, they can often help condense the useful knowledge and dispense with the extraneous stuff. History, in terms of practical theatrics, is often a matter of knowing too much, then peeling down to a level that will serve the art. Why read all those books if what you really need is only a few paragraphs of condensed information? Love your dramaturge and your dramaturge will love you.

Using the Text

As with every Shakespeare project, the text is where you need to start in order to understand the big issues that you're reading for. There are a few *huge* textual issues at stake in the fights of *Romeo and Juliet* that you, as fight director, need to be aware of. Since the flavor of your production will change based on the choices that you and the director make concerning these issues, I will address them in the most general terms possible simply to bring them to your awareness rather than create any pre-conceived notions about "correct" choices you might make.

First, and perhaps most famously, is the conflict of fighting style: Tybalt is frequently referenced as being a rapier fighter in the new-to-Shakespeare's-London Spanish style. In addition to being the "Prince of Cats," Mercutio calls Tybalt "the very butcher of a silk button a duellist, a duellist; a gentleman of the very first house, of the first and second cause!" (II.4.1181-1184). No matter what choice you make with how to deal with this text, you need to address that Tybalt is characterized as a fighter of great rhythmic capabilities, precision with a blade, and knowledge of courtly graces (i.e. Mercutio's line about Tybalt being a "gentlemen of the first and second cause"; a reference to courtly dueling behavior and conduct manuals).

You need to deal with the fact that there is an interrupted honor duel in III.i; Tybalt, infuriated, comes to find Romeo in the streets to challenge him to a duel of honor. Romeo denies Tybalt, Mercutio picks a fight instead. When Tybalt kills Mercutio in this conflict, Romeo finds himself compelled (either by anger or honor) to intervene and fight Tybalt himself, killing him. What this establishes is that the play happens in a world where there are some codified behaviors surrounding fights and dueling; this is a world where Tybalt would understand his recourse with Romeo and would reasonably expect to be able to execute it. This is also a world where such conflicts, for whatever reason determined by your director (though hopefully informed by the text), have been barred (Romeo says: "the prince expressly hath forbidden bandying in Verona streets" (III.i.1589-90). You and your director will have to discuss some way in which your Verona (be it in ancient Italy or the Wild West) can justify this text. Whatever choice you make, the fights need to reflect this.



Actors (Front L-R) Michael Levin and David Rounds in a scene from the American Shakespeare Festival's production of *Romeo and Juliet.*

As you continue to think about these fights and the history that can support them, there are several texts that will help. The breadth of your research will vary depending upon your goals, and you likely don't need to read all of these texts cover to cover. However, depending upon what questions you have and how deeply you want them answered, you will likely find your answers in one (or more) of these texts. For clarity and ease of recognition, I've grouped the texts by subject.

Elizabethan Dueling Manuals

At the time Shakespeare was writing, there were three dueling manuals available in print in England in English. It is therefore reasonable to assume that Shakespeare's knowledge of the duel (and his audience's knowledge of the duel) either came from (or is documented by) one of these three manuals: Giacomo di Grassi's *His True Arts of Defence* (1594), Vincent Saviolo's *His Practice* (in two books; 1595), and George Silver's *Paradoxes of Defence/Brief Instructions Upon my Paradoxes of Defence* (1599). Saviolo's vocabulary is clearly referenced by Shakespeare in several instances, and Silver's long tirade against Italian Rapier schools is particularly poignant in light of Romeo and Juliet. All three manuals can be accessed freely online, but they are also available in print in:

Jackson, James L. Ed. *Three Elizabethan Fencing Manuals.* New York: Scholars' Facsimiles and Reprints, 1972.

Turner, Craig and Tony Soper. *Methods and Practice of Elizabethan Swordplay.* Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1990.

Turner and Soper go through the Elizabethan manuals in an attempt to recreate an "authentic" Elizabethan fighting style, "unpacking" the manuals for the modern audience. Their volume, much more readable than the manuals themselves, provides practical explication for the modern combatant. As such, I'd consider them required reading for anyone trying to authentically replicate an Elizabethan combat model.

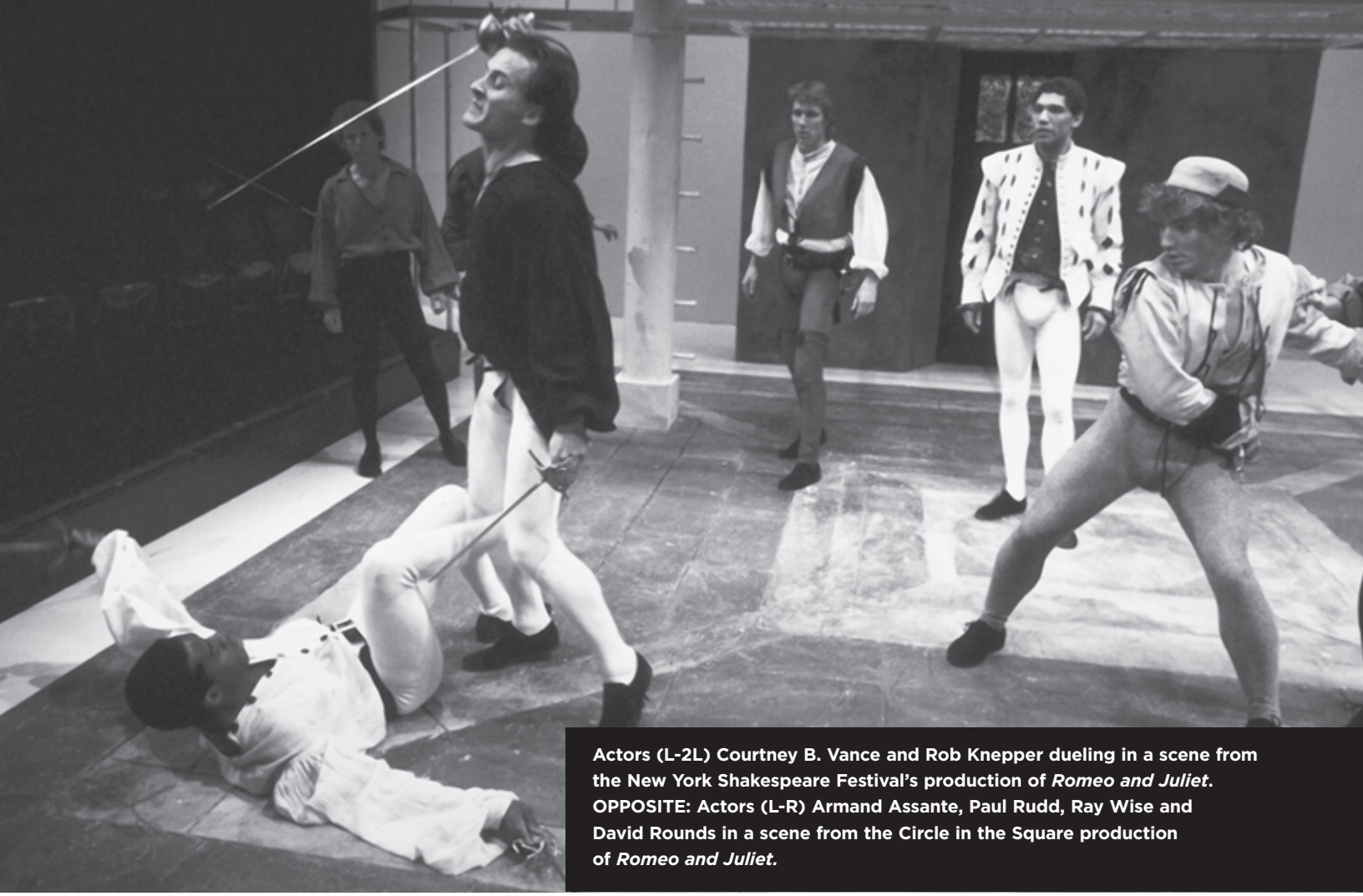
Something else to remember is that, while Shakespeare "set" plays in places other than Early Modern England, it is a generally understood convention of the Early Modern stage that these settings provided a thin veil for the true setting: England herself. While *Romeo and Juliet* ostensibly takes place in Verona, the costumes, mannerisms, and habits of its characters would have been much more English than Italian when performed on Shakespeare's stage. As such, an "authentic" recreation of a Shakespearean production's fighting style would mimic this; the characters (other than Tybalt) would be fighting in English styles rather than period Italian or Spanish rapier styles. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the First Folio note that Sampson and Gregory enter in I.i with "Swords and Bucklers"; distinctively English weapons. Because of this delineation, it would be a very strange "dead end" to research period Italian styles directly rather than what Englishmen knew of period Italian styles. While many cultures and creeds have attempted to naturalize dear William over the centuries, it cannot be forgotten that he was, after all, English.

History of the Sword

There are a multitude of volumes about the history of the sword and martial combat, but two I would recommend for this specific purpose are:

Cohen, Richard. *By the Sword: A History of Gladiators, Musketeers, Samurai, Swashbucklers, and Olympic Champions.* New York: The Modern Library, 2003.

Kiernan, V.G., *The Duel in European History: Honour and the Reign of Aristocracy.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988.



Actors (L-2L) Courtney B. Vance and Rob Knepper dueling in a scene from the New York Shakespeare Festival's production of ***Romeo and Juliet***. OPPOSITE: Actors (L-R) Armand Assante, Paul Rudd, Ray Wise and David Rounds in a scene from the Circle in the Square production of ***Romeo and Juliet.***

While research for *Romeo and Juliet* will not require you to read these volumes in their entirety, parts of each of them can help to inform the period in which you might find yourself working. Both these volumes take into account the cultural history surrounding violence and martial arts, which is quite important when crafting a living stage picture. The Cohen volume deals with a certain teleological element to how sword violence manifested through the ages. This particular information will be helpful if you're dealing with a strict period piece, since so much of the conflict in *Romeo and Juliet* relies on an old vs. new mentality wherein traditional styles are being forcibly challenged by "newfangled" engagements. Understanding why Tybalt's Spanish Rapier style is such a threat to English sensibilities is a huge part of understanding some of the underlying tensions in this show.

The Sword During Shakespeare's Time

Coming directly to the topic, there are several books and articles that specifically address this particular subject. While some of these sources might be overly scholarly for your purposes, for the sake of being thorough I will include them in the reading list.

Anglin, Jay P. "The Schools of Defense in Elizabethan London". ***Renaissance Quarterly*****, 37. No. 3 (1984): 393-410.**

Anglin examines the (literal) schools where an Elizabethan gentleman might learn dueling. This source is perhaps the most historically thick and least practical to the performance of *Romeo and Juliet*, but can help to contextualize how Shakespeare might have known anything about the art of the duel (and certainly helps to contextualize how Shakespeare's audience might have known about it). I would recommend that a fight director view this piece as "extra credit reading"; read it if you're curious or if it sounds relevant, but skip it if it doesn't.

Craig, Horace S. *Dueling Scenes and Terms in Shakespeare's Plays.* Berkeley: University of California Press, 1940.

This is an extremely useful resource for any work on combat in Shakespeare. In a slim article at the front of the volume, Craig first addresses the context of Elizabethan swordplay, then establishes Shakespeare's working dueling vocabulary. He continues on to discuss this vocabulary in its historical context, as well as the context of the plays in which it can be found. Craig then provides a handy bibliography of books on swordplay and dueling extant during Shakespeare's time (though it is unknown whether some/all of these would have been available to him in translation or even in England). He uses Shakespeare's outlined dueling vocabulary to mark those certainly familiar to Shakespeare.

Peltonen, Markku. "Francis Bacon, the Earl of Northampton, and the Jacobean Anti-Duelling Campaign." ***The Historical Journal*****. 44, no. 1 (2001): 1-28.**

——. *The Duel in Early Modern England: Civility, Politeness, and Honour.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.

In examining two of the most pivotal works of the Jacobean Anti-Dueling campaign, Peltonen also contextualizes Dueling in Jacobean England. This piece of personal violence history, though it occurred towards the end/after Shakespeare's writing career, was brewing throughout the course of Shakespeare's tenure onstage. It can shed vital light upon societal views of dueling during the period of Shakespeare's career, which in turn helps to contextualize the stigma against dueling that plays out in *Romeo and Juliet*.

Peltonen's second book is the most exhaustive modern treatise

that I have found on the topic of dueling. Chapters One ("The rise of civil courtesy and the dueling theory in Elizabethan and early Stuart England") and Two ("The Jacobean anti-duelling campaign") are the most pertinent to your work with *Romeo and Juliet*. Peltonen's treatment of the duel covers historical context, changes in law, changes in technology, and determining social factors, all of which can be used very practically in a stage show.

Quint, David. "Duelling and Civility in Sixteenth Century Italy." ***I Tatti: Studies in the Italian Renaissance*****. 7 (1997): 231-278.**

Though Quint's main focus is Italy (and I have already warned the reader against focusing too much on Italian dueling), I am including this article for context. While the wary FD will not tread too far down the path of Italian methods, some small amount of research (say, that which might be contained to a single article) might be worthwhile to establish a base level of understanding about Italian dueling practice of the time. Perhaps most importantly, Quint discusses his theories in the context of Shakespeare; after having established his basic premise, he then strays into Shakespeare's works (most notably *Romeo and Juliet* and *Henry V*) in order to discuss more "practical" applications of his ideas.

Rossi, Sergio. "Duelling in the Italian Manner: The Case of *Romeo and Juliet*." In *Shakespeare's Italy: Functions of Italian Locations in Renaissance Drama*, edited by Michele Marrapodi, Marcello Cappuzzo, and L. Falzon Stantucci, 112-124. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997.

Rossi's intellectual analysis of the fights in *Romeo and Juliet* helps to contextualize this violence from a textual space. This would make great reading if you're working on a project that doesn't have a dramaturge, but does have a director who needs a little help understanding why your job is so important to the show. Think of this one as a "secret weapon"; a way to prove to the people who write checks and might have an appreciation for looking at your work from an intellectual bent why it is that they hired you.

A Few Closing Thoughts and a Warning

As a scholar and intellectual, research is the lifeblood of my work. As a Fight Director, it helps to establish a firm basis for my work, but is never something that I allow to interfere with my art. In this way, research can simultaneously be your best friend and your worst enemy.

It is absolutely important to understand what we think we know about history, but recognize that there are limits to what can: a) be definitively proven, and b) serve the practicality of theatre. As fascinating as these dueling manuals are, I would never encourage a fight director to review them in hopes of attaining any kind of "authentic period style". The trouble here is several-fold: as anyone who has ever attempted to annotate choreography can attest, the wisdom of the body cannot be thoroughly communicated using words alone. Additionally, the few sources we have are simply a handful of men's perspectives upon an age-old art; an oligarchy, if you will, of annotation. There is no guarantee that these writings comprise the "full picture" of period dueling practices. They are guides of things that might have been, but are not canon of things absolute and unyielding. Read them as such; and read the other texts as such. Let these texts fuel the basis of your imagination, but don't let them limit your possibility. Do only as much reading as will make you feel comfortable in the text as well as the world of the play, without doing so much that you feel burdened by the history. Theatre is a creative art, and one that can educate and inspire; but it should never become enslaved to something so fragile as a history that cannot be definitively proven.

I say these things not to discourage you from doing the kind of research that I've spent the previous pages discussing, but rather to encourage you to conduct this research in a healthful and productive manner. As much as your work will suffer from a lack of reading, it can also suffer from too much reading. Do your research. Don't let it strangle your art.

Danielle Rosvally

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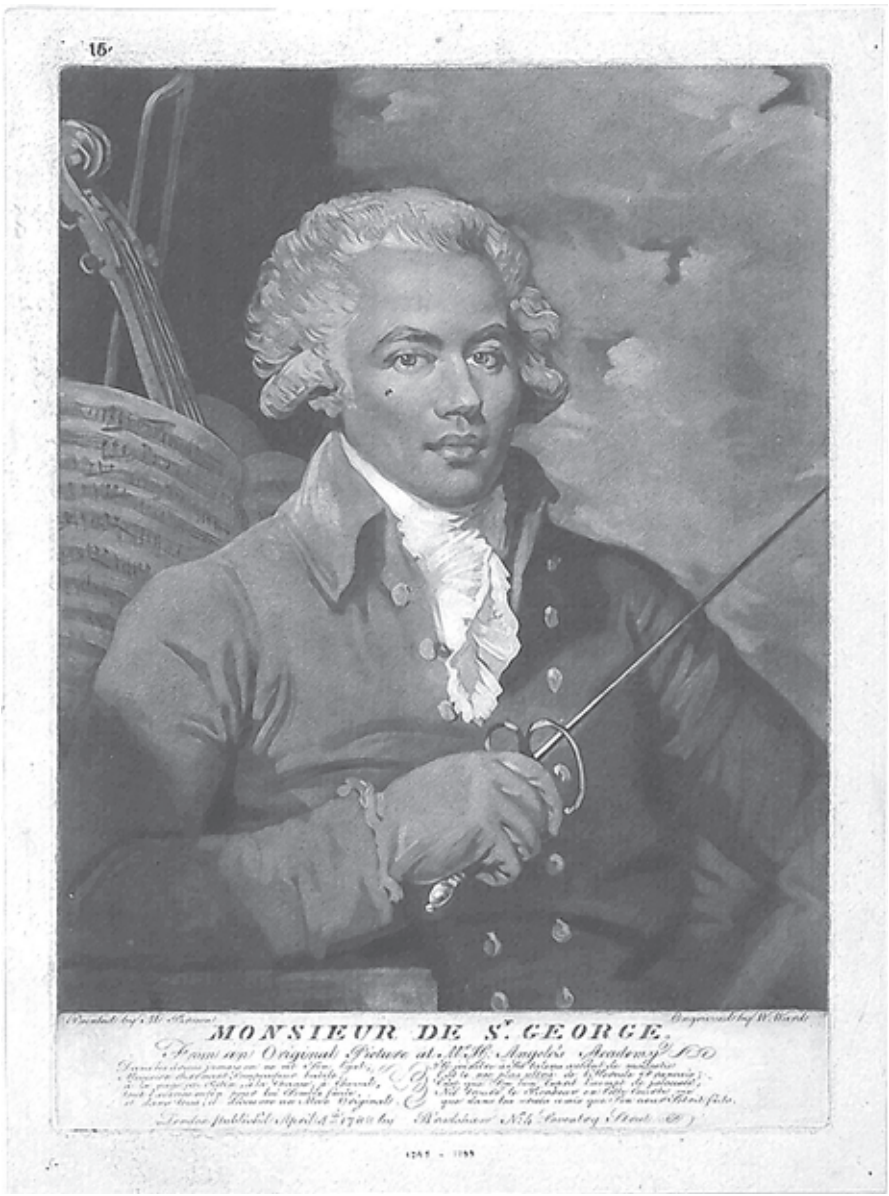
"None Ever Saw His Equal"

Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-George

BY HEIDI WOLF



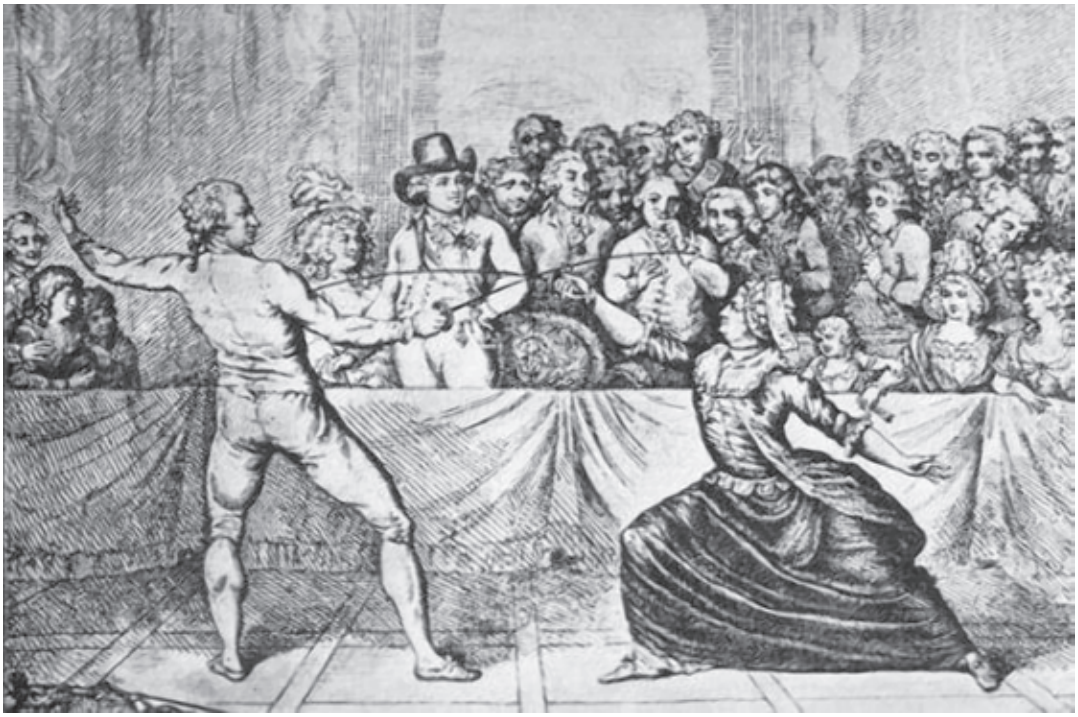
METROPOLITAN USEUM OF ART, NEW YORK

Joseph Boulogne was born a mixed-race slave on Christmas Day in the French Caribbean colony of Guadalupe, to a young slave girl named Nanon who had been captured at age 6 in Senegal by slave-traders and shipped to the West Indies. Joseph's birth year is given variously as 1739 and 1745, and his paternity has been attributed to various French slaveowners on Guadalupe.[1] In this article I accept the genealogical research of Alain Guédé, who concluded that Joseph's father was Guillaume-Pierre Tavernier de Boullongne, a minor French noble who owned a Guadalupe sugar plantation. Guillaume-Pierre purchased Joseph's mother when she was 14, so it is plausible that he sired her child.

In the 18th century, most slaves on a sugar plantation performed backbreaking manual labor, though some slave children were trained to play music for their owners' entertainment. Joseph was especially favored; he was taught to read and write, as well as to play the violin.[2] When Joseph's father sold his plantation, he traveled home to France with Nanon and 8-year-old Joseph, of whom he was evidently fond. Guillaume-Pierre settled in Paris, near the royal court at Versailles, and acquired considerable influence in French upper-class society and politics.

In accordance with French law at that time, Joseph and Nanon gained freedom and French citizenship the moment they set foot on the French mainland. Children of slaves were barred by French law from inheriting their white parent's titles of nobility, so Guillaume-Pierre invented a title for his mixed-race son. Joseph was given the courtesy title *Chevalier* ["Knight"] and the surname "Saint-George" from a sugar plantation near his birthplace.[3]

Young Saint-George was educated in all of the arts and skills considered appropriate to a French nobleman. An excellent athlete as well as a talented musician, he was enrolled at age 13 as a boarding student at the fencing school of Nicolas Texier de la Boëssière, the inventor of the fencing mask. La Boëssière's school emphasized good character and academic excellence as emphatically as skill in swordplay. Saint-George flourished in this environment, winning championship bouts against the best fencers in Europe from age 15 onward.[4]



ABOVE: "Assaut d'Armes Chevalier Saint-George / Chevalier d'Eon donné à Carlton House le 9 avril 1787 en la présence de son Altesse le Prince de Galles (Wales), la Noblesse et plusieurs célèbres Maîtres d'Armes". Engraving by Gosselin, after April 9, 1787.

OPPOSITE: William Ward (1766-1826), "Monsieur de St. George, from an original picture at Mr. H. Angelo's Academy" after Mather Brown's oil portrait of same. Mezzotint, 1788.

Saint-George became celebrated as the *non pareil* among master fencers, pointed out as the ultimate example of superb swordsmanship and earning the *sobriquet*, or nickname, of "the famous Saint-George." Nicolas La Boëssière wrote a poem about Saint-George with the opening line, "In arms, none ever saw his equal."[5] Nicolas' son, Antoine La Boëssière, author of the 1818 fencing manual *Traité de l'art des armes* (*Treatise on the Art of Weapons*), included a seven-page memoir of Saint-George which began: "Perhaps the most extraordinary man ever known in fencing, and indeed in all forms of physical training, was without doubt the famous Saint-George; one could say of him…: 'Nature made him and broke the mold.' "[6] The American founding father John Adams noted admiringly in his diary, while visiting Paris in 1779: "[Saint-George] is the most accomplished Man in Europe in Riding, Running, Shooting, Fencing, Dancing, Musick. He will hit the Button, any Button on the Coat or Waistcoat of the greatest Masters. He will hit a Crown Piece in the Air with a Pistoll Ball."[7]

Stories abounded of Saint-George's kindness and liberality. Antoine La Boëssière wrote: "With his sensitive heart he was bound to be generous, and he was extremely so; taking his wealth lightly, what he had belonged to his friends…. I myself knew elderly people to whom he brought the most touching assistance and care…. His gifts were the more valuable because of the tact with which he arranged for them to be accepted."[8] Stories were also told of his anger when his mixed-race ancestry was denigrated. On one occasion, hearing a snide remark that he was "badly bleached," , Saint-George dunked the offender headfirst in a filthy gutter and retorted, "Now you're as badly bleached as me."[9]

Simultaneously, Saint-George received praise as a musician. In addition to his career as a virtuoso solo violinist and an orchestra concertmaster, he made a name for himself as a fine composer of string quartets, concertos, and operas. Although his success was hampered by racism and professional jealousies in the music world, Saint-George nevertheless composed, played, and conducted his own works for the *crème de la crème* of French aristocracy, billed on concert posters as "the black Mozart" in recognition of his musical gifts.[10]

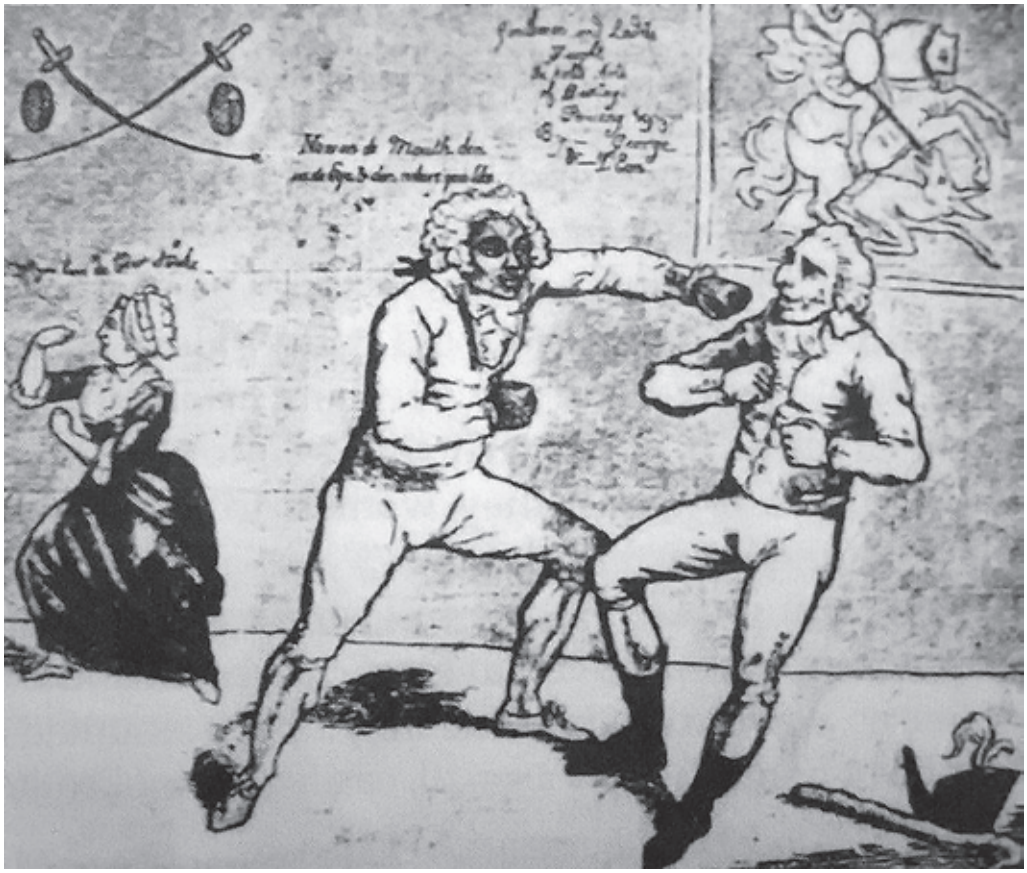
Saint-George traveled widely, visiting London on multiple occasions. He made time while there to train and compete at Henry Angelo's fencing studio, where his portrait and a pair of his fencing shoes had a place of honor on the *salon* wall, as documented in a 1787 watercolor by the English artist Thomas Rowlandson.[11] In that same year, Saint-George took part in a demonstration fencing match at the Prince of Wales' residence, when the Chevalier d'Eon, a 59-year-old cross-dressing French spy, needed a fencing partner for the occasion.[12] The older man won the match, perhaps due to Saint-George having torn an Achilles tendon a few years earlier;[13] though some of their contemporaries hinted that in deference to his elderly partner, Joseph allowed d'Eon to win.[14]

Saint-George's political activities demonstrated a strong sense of responsibility toward those less fortunate than himself, and to his adopted country. He advocated for the abolition of slavery and was featured in a political cartoon in the *London Morning Post* in 1789, after subduing a gang of anti-abolitionists who attacked him in a London alleyway.[15] The cartoonist included fencing foils and masks, an image of "Saint George" fighting the "Dragon" of the slave trade, and a "dukes-up" d'Eon in the background, supporting Saint-George against his pro-slavery adversaries.

After the 1789 French Revolution, Saint-George served with distinction as the first mixed-race French Army colonel, commanding a segregated battalion of hundreds of men of color. Alex Dumas, the mixed-race father of novelist Alexandre Dumas and the inspiration for *The Count of Monte Cristo*, served in "the Legion of Saint-George" as a young man and later became one of the most successful French generals of the Napoleonic Wars.[16]

When the French Revolution disintegrated into the Reign of Terror in 1793–94, Saint-George's good fortune suffered an abrupt reverse. Imprisoned like General Alex Dumas on a trumped-up pretext, his finances and physical wellbeing deteriorated. Following his release, Saint-George's health and spirits were further damaged by a sojourn in France's Caribbean colony of Saint-Domingue, where he witnessed the brutal aftermath of a failed slave revolt. He died in 1799 after a brief illness, a few months short of his Christmastime birthday. Not long before his death, he said to a friend, "*Ils ne m'ont pas pendu, mais perdu*" ("They didn't hang me, but they lost me")[17]—a poignant play on words, referencing his obscure circumstances at the end of a life lived in the sunshine of well-deserved acclaim.

Joseph Boulogne, Chevalier de Saint-George, was a master of fence, of music, and of the military arts. He was an ardent abolitionist, a man of many devoted friends, and a patriotic citizen of France. He lives on in the stories of his legendary career as a duellist, and in the treasure trove of his music, still being performed today.



Political cartoon, *London Morning Post,* Oct. 12, 1789. Saint-Georges and d'Eon boxing against the slave trade. Unknown cartoonist.

Some listeners to Saint-George's music have remarked on a thread of melancholy running through his compositions[18], and attributed it to his early years as an enslaved child on his father's estate. Perhaps it was also a melancholy of loneliness: of being the only person of color (or one of very few) in his professional and social milieu.[19] More than 200 years later, we can write a coda to the story of the Chevalier Saint-George, one that honors his memory and remarkable accomplishments. Joseph Boulogne's phenomenal talents as swordsman and musician, and his actions as a change agent, provide an illustrious legacy to inspire current and future generations of stage combatants.

Acknowledgments

My thanks to FM Ian Rose for his championing of Saint-George, and his courtesy in encouraging me to write this article; to Dr. Zachary Dorsey, a brilliant storyteller and a master at drawing forth the stories of others; and to each of my classmates, teachers, and students of color, for including me in their stage combat practice. *Salut*.

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Endnotes

1 The institution of slavery, which included the impregnation of enslaved women by their owners and the treatment of those women and their children as disposable property, meant that clear genealogical records were not universally kept.
2 Cline-Ransome, 5.
3 Although his surname was sometimes spelled "Saint-Georges," Joseph's preference was to omit the final "s". Guédé, 26: "…an English affectation the chevalier retained his whole life."
4 La Boëssière, xv-xvi.
5 Angelo, 63-64.
6 La Boëssière, xv; translation by H. Wolf.
7 Guédé, 132.
8 La Boëssière, xxi; translation by H. Wolf.
9 Guédé, 73.
10 Brewster, 26-28.
11 Rowlandson, 1787 depiction of Henry Angelo's fencing studio.
12 Telfer, 308.
13 La Boëssière, xix.
14 Telfer, 309.
15 Guédé, 184.
16 Reiss, 10-11.
17 Guédé, 258.
18 Guédé, 140-142.
19 Brewster, 44.

The Killer's Journey

By Jay Peterson

"Was that right?" The trend of embracing what's called a "realistic" aesthetic for cinematic violence, combined with my professional experiences in both the Iraq and Afghanistan wars means I often hear variations on the theme of, "did I kill him right?"

Here, the actor looked up expectantly at me from the dinner table, suppressed pistol in hand, raised in a "temple index" carry[1]. Across the table was his scene partner, slumped over and slack-jawed, three relatively neat holes about the solar plexus oozing blood down his shirt. I gave the gunman a thumbs-up as he handed off the pistol, clearing and holstering it at my belt while the crew set up for the next shot.

The problem with answering such questions was that I couldn't find an actionable baseline that determined what a "right" kill looked like, whether onstage or in front of the cameras. Discussing details of my background was never an issue. The hurdle was putting said knowledge into dramatic terms an actor could actually use. I could go into copious detail what it was like for a twenty-something, linebacker-sized actor turned machine gunner, but that was going to be of limited help to someone playing Coriolanus, or Romeo, or Lady DeWinter.

I turned to the literature, but scholarship on the topic was less than helpful. Though the canon of dramatic literature is full of killers and killed, there are no common aspects of a story that determined whether or not a kill would occur, or for what reason. Between characters, a kill is like a kiss. It can be aggressive or reluctant, clumsy or skillful, passionate, polite, or perfunctory. It can linger for what feels like eternity or begin and end in an instant. And no matter how professional or detached, kills always bear a personal touch. People kill for a multitude of reasons, and their motives run the length of the emotional spectrum.

Criminology texts dealing with murderers were understandably narrow in scope and only tangentially related to killing in general, murder being the more legally relevant focus. In legal terms, the act of taking another life is considered unlawful unless somehow justified, as in the case of self-defense or warfare. Focusing on murder, while viewing other types of kills as "murders with proper excuses," wasn't helpful for my purposes. I was working from a different direction-the idea of murder as an unlawful subset of killing. For my purposes, all murders are killings, but not all killings are murders. Therefore, studying killing where I believed I would find my answers.

The supposed seminal works on the topic, *On Killing* and *On Combat*, by Lt.Col. David Grossman and Loren W. Christensen respectively, proved unenlightening. While Grossman's work has some worthy aspects (not the least of which the view that killing and murder are not synonymous), others fell short. His theory of "Universal Human Phobia," or the theory that human beings have an innate resistance to killing each other, doesn't hold up when faced with humanity's bloodstained history (p. 2-7). Another of Grossman's constructs, "Sheepdog theory," posits that human violence breaks along three distinct personality types: those who have no capacity for violence ("the sheep"), those who can commit violence but possess empathy ("the sheepdogs") and those who commit violence and feel no empathy ("the wolves")(Grossman p.183-185) His aim was to attend to the psychological health of those who committed societal "good" kills: police officers, soldiers, and those who acted in self-defense. While such a goal is worthy, the theory itself is overly simplistic, ignoring both humanity's capacity for violence in general, and the increasing divide between soldier and civilian, police officer and citizen. I've personally taken to replacing Grossman's preferred terms with "peasants, heroes, and villains," when discussing the theory to emphasize this point. After leaving a multitude of vulgar comments scribbled in the margins of my personal copies, I set both aside and began from scratch to come up with a realistic, teachable, and workable process for interpreting killing on the stage.

From the beginning, I established that I would explore killing as an action, rather than a killer's state of being. I was convinced that there was no such thing as "bloodlust" or a "killing rage," but that emotions surrounding the act of a kill were more from the environment surrounding the action, rather than the act itself. My approach focused on a search for a universal application of the killing action. Breaking down kills into "segments," an actor could use the following process as a rough guide for playing effective, character driven kills. A year and a half of research later, I explored my findings with a small group of volunteer actors. We followed what we named "The Killer's Journey" in a series of improv experiments. The four segments of a kill were: Thresholds, Decisions, Effects, and Aftermaths.

Thresholds

Everyone has a "killing threshold," a given set of circumstances that will cause a person to take a human life, or possibly more than one. It may not be acknowledged or admitted, but every individual has the potential to kill when a certain combination of circumstances falls into place. There is no one source for this threshold; it's a mix of factors both external (culture, religion, law) and internal (personal ethics, instincts, and reactions to current circumstances). As an actor, this is where research of the character's background is able to answer questions surrounding the "why?" of a particular kill.

The term "threshold" is a bit of a misnomer. The combination of circumstances acts more like tumblers in a lock. Certain ones have to turn in order to "open the lock" and for the kill to be attempted. Think of a S.W.A.T. team sniper. In one scenario, she is on duty, setting up her position. She acquires her target, is given clearance to fire, and pulls the trigger. In another scenario, a mugger steps out of a shadow in a grocer's parking lot and threatens her child with a knife. She draws her own sidearm and shoots the mugger without hesitation. In a third scenario, she is offered a stack of $100 bills four inches high to shoot a speaker at a podium, and she refuses. Her thresholds were reached in the first two scenarios, but not in the third.

My first sensei told me of a case he heard of during his time with the NYPD. A young mother was surprised by a home invader. He held her at knifepoint while her child was in the next room. The mother calmly followed the intruder's commands, opening her safe, leading the intruder about the house to the locations of various valuables, and giving no resistance to an ensuing sexual assault. During the latter, the intruder threatened to kill her son, at which point the mother caved in the intruder's skull with a lamp. Police arrived to find her in shock, not far from his cooling corpse. Assault on her home, her property, and her person did not cross her threshold, but a threat to her child did. Actors must look for similar thresholds in their characters, keeping in mind a character may not be aware of what their thresholds are, and may in fact react in horror or regret at crossing them, no matter how legitimate they seem. When my actors established a character's thresholds, they gained an insight into why that character kills in that specific time and manner.

When exploring a character's thresholds, the most common obstacle was the reluctance to hold a character's thresholds lower than the actor's own. This is understandable. As civilized people, we like to think only the most dire of circumstances would cause us to take a human life. That said, the characters we play can both face those circumstances and have (sometimes extremely) lower thresholds than our own. Think of the conversation between Clarence's murderers in *Richard III*. One stays his hand, not worried about legal punishment but damnation. A reminder of monetary reward causes the murderer to cross his threshold and continue. One of my volunteer actors summed it up as, "don't be afraid to be a villain."

Decisions

Once thresholds are crossed, the character is willing and able to kill another person. This takes place in one of two ways. A *Reflexive kill* takes place with no conscious thought on the subject between the threshold being reached and the decision to kill being made. This decision is single-stage, with time for minimal dialog, but no pondering the pros and cons of action. Reflexive kills are usually faster, more animalistic, and occasionally more brutal. Romeo's killing of Tybalt, with minimal dialogue but no rational thought involved, is an example of a reflexive kill. A *Rational kill* takes place when there is conscious thought between the threshold being reached and the decision being made. This can take moments (MacBeth killing Young Siward in *Macbeth*), an in-depth conversation (Clarence's murderers in *Richard III*), or the bulk of a performance (*Hamlet*).

The first exercise in my exploration class handled both thresholds and decisions. My actors paired up, deciding who would kill, who would die, and what the killer's threshold would be. To keep the focus on decisions and thresholds rather than choreography, the scenes took place in a world where one could kill with a simple touch or gesture. A house rule of "no Darth Vader Force chokes, please," got the giggles out of everyone's system. The first round of scenes focused on Reflexive kills, and all participants demonstrated a quick grasp of the concept: a girl trapped in a cave-in killed a companion who was hyperventilating and using up the air, a surprised mugging victim killed her attacker, and a travelling peddler killed a stranger from a hated neighboring village.

For the second round, everyone switched roles as killers became the killed (we were all walking the Killer's Journey, after all). This time, scenes focused on Rational kills. A contested inheritance, a date gone wrong and a business plan gone worse all brought about the demise of various characters. The distinction between reflexive and rational kills codified itself swiftly. Reflexive kills seemed more visceral and animalistic. Movements in a reflexive kill were typically faster, and the scenes themselves picked up speed in leading up to the kill. Rational kills felt colder and more logical. The rational scenes kept an even pace or even slowed down while leading up to a kill, establishing tension.

Effects

Fighting for one's life is such a high-intensity event that the human body instinctively drugs itself in the process, what self-defense instructors dubbed "the chemical cocktail" since at least the 1970s. Modern science remains unsure of what composes the effect. Adrenaline is a component, as are various epinephrines, but the exact composition is currently unknown to science. Given the logistical and ethical problems with taking blood samples during a firefight, it might remain so for some time.

What is known, however, are the various physiological effects: increased heart rate, increased blood pressure, tunnel vision, altered perception, memory gaps, and tactile dissonance. Modern science knows that some or all of these effects occur in combat, but no information is yet available on which ones manifest in which people under what circumstances, and why. Bringing this back again to the stage, it is rare that an actor's choice determines the inclusion, duration, or nature of the reaction in a manner visible to the audience, because everything is internal. It is far more of a director's choice, particularly in the world of film, where these effects can be more easily presented to an audience (POV camera angles, slowed photography, soundtrack dissonance, etc.).

After providing my students a quick review of the body response to combat, the actors once again paired off and were given a choice of deaths (a simple choke, a gunshot, and a stabbing). Each pair was allowed to rehearse first, and allowed to choose a threshold and decision. Pairs presented their work to the class when ready. In every case, rudimentary but believable and safe kills emerged from their scenes.

For the next phase, I kept everyone in with their current partners and gave them a minute to go over their scenes. All scenes were performed again, but with two key differences. The first required each pair to be silent. The second was the inclusion of outside sound, specifically natural sound. At the top of each pair's second performance, I played a continuous natural sound: a thunderstorm, waves, a waterfall, etc. Deprived of vocalization, the sound of bodies

moving became the only punctuation on the aural landscape. Each movement became sharper, crisper, and in many cases slowed down.

Breaking for discussion, several actors pointed out how the sound altered their perception, heightening their own focus on the moment. This was also true for the actors in the audience. It was understood that sound was more a director's choice than a performer's, The recent *Judge Dredd* film made it into a plot point, where certain characters used a drug called "slo-mo," which altered a user's perception of time. The in-universe acknowledgement that the characters are experiencing time as slowed down is used to great visceral effect when a crime lord forces rebels to take this drug before killing them. The actors agreed that such special effects are not feasible for theater, but that sound and light effects can alter the audience's perception of action.

More importantly, I argued that for performers, understanding how altered perception happens comes more into play further on in a performance. It affects the character's memory. In some scenarios, it may even have bearing on the story (How did Fleance manage to escape? How did Tybalt screw up badly enough to wound the wrong opponent?).

Aftermath

Concluding the evening was a brief discussion of the aftermath of a kill. This alone is a subject worthy of a separate article. For the purposes of application, however, aftermath is limited to exploring what can follow the outcome of a scene. This is somewhat of a return to the beginning, as some of the same factors that influence a kill to begin with can also influence the reaction to it. Law, society, and religion all have doctrines surrounding kills in general, as well as leniency for certain types of killing We see these in play outside the theater, in our reactions to "killers" who make the headlines in the real world.

Science is beginning to recognize the effect of killing on common urges such as appetite, sleep, and libido. Life-or-death combat is an exhausting, rapid calorie-burning activity, which in a number of anecdotal cases has an aphrodisiac effect (Grossman and Christensen p. 276). Differentiations between how the character considers the "rightness" of their kill may be tracked by their indulgence in these urges (or reluctance to do so). Macbeth's difficulty in sleeping is a classic example of the latter, if one considers it originating in and derived from Duncan's murder. These are "broad strokes" reactions, however. A character who kills and then goes home hungry, horny, and sleeping like a log is a very simplistic shorthand to indicate a good kill. By the same token, sleeplessness and lack of appetite alone are not indicative of a "bad" kill in the eyes of the killer themselves.

Takeaways

I began the journey searching for what I could tell an actor to let them know they'd made a "right" kill. I found the human experience of killing (as opposed to the narrow focus on murders and battlefield actions) still in its infancy as a field of study. However, there have always been killers among us, perhaps more than we realize. The FBI's unified crime report claims that there were over 13,000 justified homicides in America between 1993 and 2013. The recent Iraq and Afghanistan wars were fought by over 2 million Americans, and many more Iraqis and Afghanis. If only one soldier in a hundred killed on the battlefield, then that's another 20,000 "legitimate" killers. That is 33,000 people who know what it is to take a life and see their experiences reflected in our stories.

My workshop actors didn't find a simple determination that made a depicted kill "right" one way or another. But the journey gave them questions to explore the process and give them clearer understanding of what questions need to be asked: What are the character's killing thresholds? Is the character aware of them? How was the decision to kill made? How did the character experience the kill? What noticeable effects did the kill have on the character? These five questions give us a map to understanding what it is to kill for that character in that time and manner.

Killing is rightly considered one of the darker aspects of the human condition. But portraying a killer should be neither overly simplistic nor hopelessly complex. Above all else, killers are human, with all of the compassion and cruelty that status entails. They are humans who have crossed their thresholds and made a decision. And their journeys are what have made our stories since we began to tell them.

Endnotes

1 Current name for a recently developed pistol carry where the arm is tucked against the body, elbow bent, muzzle facing upwards, and the pistol held parallel to the shooter's temple.

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Fight Matters

Why We Fight

BY JOSEPH TRAVERS, SAFD FD/CT

Over the last few decades, those of us who work as fight directors have struggled to be considered by directors, designers and producers as creative collaborators, and not merely as helpful craftsmen brought in to keep actors safe and teach period sword fighting. We have sought to be treated as *artists* in our own right, with our own place at the table, and our own voice in the creative process that gives birth to the theatrical event. Fortune has smiled upon us, and more and more, it is beginning to happen.

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Along with claiming our place as "co-creators," as artists we must also acknowledge a certain level of responsibility. We must take the measure of the effect of our work on the audience and on society as a whole. We must begin to ask ourselves not only *How?*, but *Why?* ; *Why this moment of violence? Why now in the play? Why need it be seen?*

It is sobering to remember what it is we are actually doing - creating the imitation and illusion of *violence*. While we all know it is indeed illusion, and while our goal of "safety first" is the opposite of the goal of real violence, we have to admit we often strive mightily to make this violence have as "realistic" an effect as possible. In these cases, we want the audience to be as chilled, as frightened and as shocked as they would be if they were in the room during an actual violent act. When we pursue such a goal, we seek to place an already receptive audience into a vulnerable and impressionable state. This is a powerful thing we are attempting! As we work to open the door to the hearts and minds of our fellow men and women, do we ask, "To what end?" What must we do, as we hold these hearts and minds in trust?

Often the work of those who create action and fights aims at nothing more than providing excitement or thrills. Millions of dollars and countless hours are invested each year in the creation of moments of dramatic violence on stage and screen for just this end, and it is undoubtedly true that a little escapism is good for us all. Audiences do not always seek self-examination and reflection when they go to the theatre. Yet not all of our work fits into this category.

I've borrowed the title of this essay from two works – Frank Capra's World War II era film series, designed to encourage and inspire the war effort, and Eugene Jarecki's 2006 documentary about the effects of America's military involvement around the world. From one point of view, both are works about our nation's relationship to violence. They are serious references for a serious subject, for as we consider our work as fight directors, we must admit that violence on stage and screen can have profound, far-reaching consequences. Studies exist, for example, on the effect of television violence on the aggressive tendencies of young children, and on the effect of violent video games on such tendencies in young adults.

We live in a violent world, and we are reminded frequently of that violence, without needing to see a film or a play. We are bombarded daily with news of horrific events, from wars around the world to shootings in our neighborhoods. In the context of our work as fight directors, it would be foolish to wrongly disassociate ourselves from these events, as if their occurrence in the world should not affect what we do. As if we needn't bear in mind (and heart) the world in which we live.

It is right for us to question, as we create a scene of violence, "What effect does this have on the audience, in light of the violence that they see and hear about outside the theatre?" Our efforts can either serve to further desensitize a seemingly increasingly numb population, or they can strike a cautionary note as we hold the proverbial mirror up to the violence within us all. Sometimes it becomes our job to terrify, and when it does we should be sure to know why, and what for, so that ultimately the audience's finer parts—as Abraham Lincoln put it, "the better angels of our nature"—are stirred, encouraged, or even (when it's right) enraged by what they see and hear, and not merely marginalized so that other parts of them can be titillated.

Of course, there's only so much we can do about what an audience takes from a chillingly violent moment (Gloucester's blinding in *King Lear* or Lavinia's cruel rape and dismemberment in *Titus Andronicus* come to mind), but what we can do, we must do. In the end, it matters *how* we hold up the mirror. Let us not forget, as we reflect the violent within us, all the rest of what makes us human. As we reveal and expose the coarse, let us do what we can to awaken the fine.

It is perhaps doubtful that those of us with careers in fight directing began them because we sought an opportunity to make social statements. Just being able to work at what we love, and do our work well, were strong enough motivators at first. Nevertheless, here we are, with the mirror in our hands, and the hearts and minds of the audience open before us.

Let us be *artists*.

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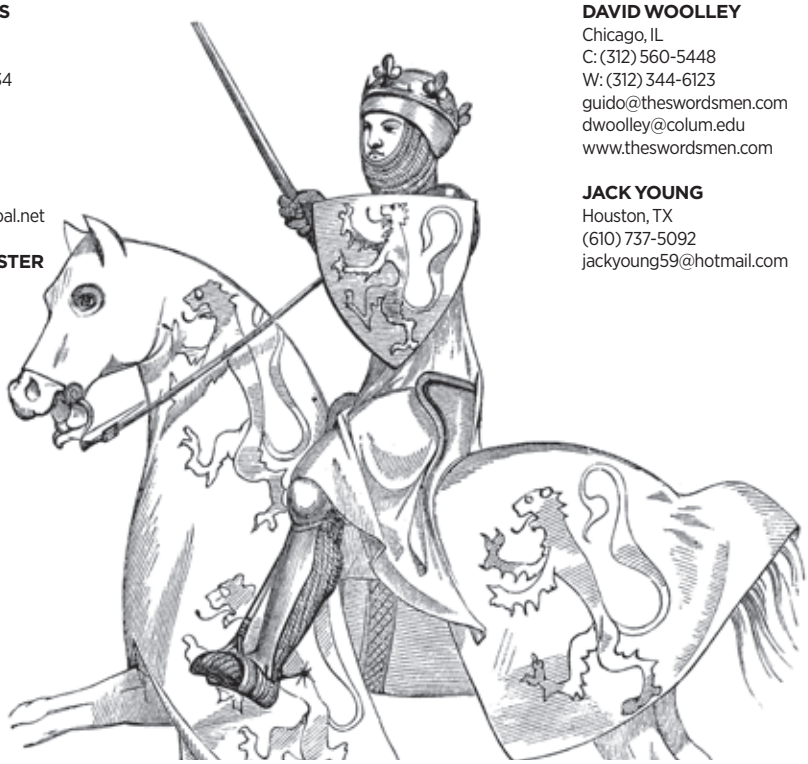

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The Society of American Fight Directors is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to promoting safety and fostering excellence in the art of stage combat. The SAFD is committed to providing the highest level of service through initiating and maintaining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

Whether you are a producer, director, actor or teacher, we can help accelerate your stage combat skills. SAFD members gain access to a world class networking organization, high caliber stage combat training and mentorship designed to expand your career. Our members include professional actors, directors, producers, educators, dancers, singers, stunt performers, historians, scholars and armorers working in theatre, film, television, all levels of academia, stunt shows, opera and the video gaming industry.

The SAFD Recognized Membership Levels

Friend
One need not be a stage fighter, teacher, or choreographer to join and be active in the SAFD. Any individual who has an interest in the stage combative arts who wants to keep abreast of the field and receive all the benefits of memberships may join as a friend.

Certified Teacher
Any individual who has successfully completed the SAFD Teacher Certification Workshop. These individuals are endorsed by the Society to teach staged combat and may teach the SAFD Skills Proficiency Test.

Actor Combatant
Any individual who has passed an SAFD Skills Proficiency Test and is current in Unarmed, Rapier & Dagger (or Single Sword), and another discipline. The SAFD considers Actor/Combatants to be proficient in performing staged combat safely and effectively.

Fight Director
Any individual who has held the status of Certified Teacher of the SAFD for a minimum of three years and has demonstrated through work in the professional arena a high level of expertise as a teacher and choreographer of staged combat. These individuals are endorsed by the Society to direct and/or choreograph incidents of physical violence.

Advanced Actor Combatant
Any individual who is current in six of eight SAFD disciplines, of which at least three (3) must be recommended passes and is a member in good standing. The SAFD acknowledges Advanced Actor Combatants as highly skilled performers of staged fighting.

Fight Master
Individuals who have successfully fulfilled the requirements of Fight Master as established and published by the Governing Body and awarded recognition by the current body of Fight Masters (College of Fight Masters). Individuals must be members in good standing and engage in continued active service to the Society.

33% savings for new members!

Join or Renew Your Membership Today!

How much does it cost?

If you have *never* been a member of the SAFD, you can join for just $30.00 for your first year of membership.

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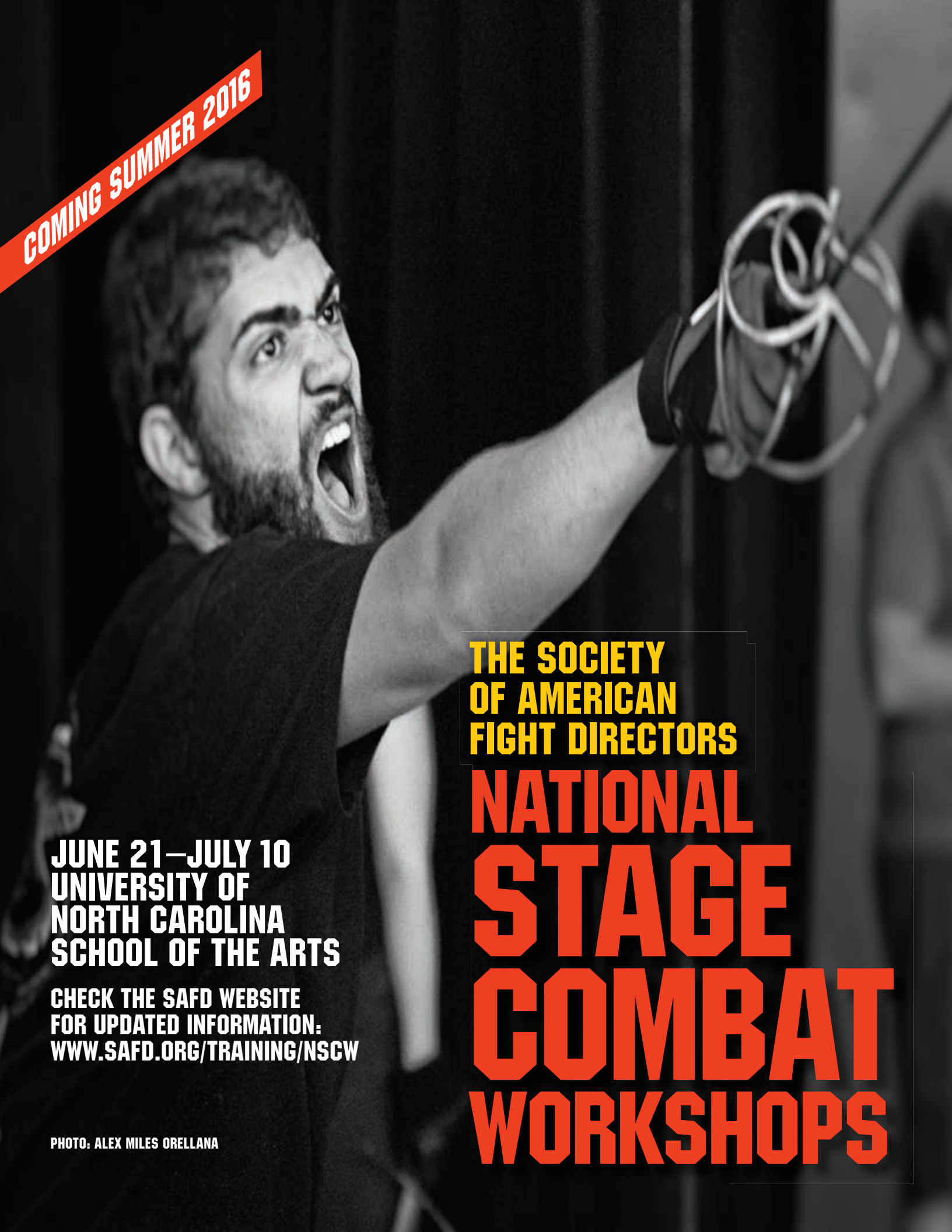
Ready to join or renew?

You will need to login or set up an account at through the SAFD website (www.safd.org). From there you will be guided through the membership payment process.

Thank you for supporting The Society of American Fight Directors.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