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The Society of American Fight Directors

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## The Cutting Edge, September/October 2009, Vol. 20 Issue 5

The Society of American Fight Directors

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# The Cutting Edge

## IN THE SPOTLIGHT WITH MARK GUINN!

If you are interested in being featured or would like to nominate another member, please contact Layout Editor, Katie Mueller - [Perchance2dream6@aol.com](mailto:Perchance2dream6@aol.com)

### CONGRATULATIONS TO THE NEWLY INDUCTED FIGHT MASTER, MARK GUINN!

**SAFD:** How did you first hear about the SAFD, and why did you become a member?

**MG:** Derisively. Spat out of the stunt arranger's mouth like a wad of wasted chew. But that didn't stop me. I figured he was an idiot and if he didn't like 'em then I probably would.

That year I meet Drew Fracher, and it was the beginning of a lifelong friendship. The Boonies, cast members of the outdoor drama *The Legend of Daniel Boone*, based in Harrodsburg, Ky, had come to visit *Bluejacket* and beyond the softball and parties, lasting friendships were formed that summer. The following year I was at the *Legend of Daniel Boone* where Drew Fracher and David Leong were choreographing fights. They brought in Charles Killian to teach a test class. Michael Donahue and I took our first test the summer of 1984. Somehow we managed to get through the test and accomplish a recommendation. I was hooked. I had found a way to order my wild ass ways. I had found a group of individuals that shared a similar vision and purpose. The SAFD offered me my first professional network and I seized that opportunity. It was clear to me that the fight masters and senior members of the organization in the mid-eighties had clear visions for the theatre and film. Visions that I shared. It was those early years, apprenticeships, and workshops that allowed me the unfettered development of my art and craft. A development augmented by the birth of the regional workshops. A development that has continued unfettered to this day.



Mark and Jake Guinn

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### Comic of the Issue!



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**The Pen is Mightier  
Than the Sword...**  
Michael Mueller - Editor-in-Chief

end; and yet, more often than not, it can be compared to picking up an loaded weapon. There is great power and responsibility that accompany both, however both can easily back fire, either killing you or leave you wishing that it had.

The fear of committing to any kind of service is easy to understand. Most organizations that rely on volunteers take advantage of their passion, run them into the ground, and are surprised when steadfast individuals leave their posts, forgetting just how much they have done already. Volunteer service can also be thankless and, in a world where goals require payment, affirmation, or promotion, it can be hard to adjust the mindset.

In this issue, our newest Fight Master, Mark Guinn, comments on the importance of service, stressing that "he would like to see continued active participation by the membership in developing the future of this organization". Weighing in on a discussion at a workshop is great, but should not really be considered active participation. Taking the time, and making the effort, to present arguments, research, and proposals aimed at bettering the organization to the Governing Body is active participation. Workshop coordination is active participation. Some of our representatives have taken great pride in actively participating in this kind of outreach, while others have taken the passive approach, waiting for members to contact them and doing only what is necessary.

This may seem like a rather long way to get to my point, but clarifying what service means to me is necessary to avoid confusion regarding my dilemma. The trouble I am having is that *The Cutting Edge* is experiencing more contributions per issue than ever before. What is even better is that they are from a wide range of the membership, and not just an increase from a select handful. This is fantastic. I'm so jazzed that new topics and ideas are being explored and that different points of view are being expressed. The flip side, and where my predicament comes in, is that I was really disheartened by the lack of nominees for the Membership Representative positions. Everyone who currently hold the positions are superb, and I am thankful that our CT, FD, and FM representatives will be able to continue the great work they have been doing for the past three years, but essentially we only had two nominees for four positions. Let's remember that we are talking about an organization with around 800 members.

Perhaps you can help me in my understanding by emailing me to tell me why you didn't throw your name, or someone you know into the mix? Is there something particular about these roles that kept you from nominating someone, or yourself? Were the descriptions too vague or the time commitment too long? As an organization that relies on volunteers, your feedback is vital.

Your active support enables the SAFD to continue to set the bar of excellence in theatrical violence. From personal experience, I have found that the more I have given to this organization, the more knowledge, friendships, and enjoyment I have received. Thank you to all those who continue to actively serve this great organization. For those looking to enhance the benefits of your membership, please consider donating your time. Feel free to email me with your interests and I'm happy to put you in contact with those who can help. Empower yourself by taking more responsibility in the membership you have chosen.

*Michael Mueller*

2. *The Cutting Edge*. May/June 2009

Please send all submissions, comments and questions to:

[cuttingedge@safd.org](mailto:cuttingedge@safd.org)

The Cutting Edge  
Mission Statement

*The Cutting Edge*, a bimonthly newsletter written exclusively by and for the membership of the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD), provides its readers with resources to stay involved and always on the cutting edge of stage combat.

Our publication aims to:

- ♦ Keep the membership informed about SAFD events, policies, opportunities, membership activities and useful industry information
- ♦ Provide the membership with a forum for open discourse
- ♦ Welcome new members and engage current members



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The Cutting Edge  
Submission Deadlines

Issue	Due Date
Jan. / Feb. 2009	Dec. 1, 2008
March / April 2009	Jan. 1, 2009
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Regional Reports to Regional Reps.

Issue	Due Date
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# From the Governing Body



Amidst all of the excitement of the National Stage Combat Workshop, the Governing Body does not currently have a lot of news to report. However, there are a few important announcements and reminders:

Mike Mahaffey has been named as our new NSCW coordinator. Angela Bonacasa has done a great job over the past five years and she leaves some big shoes to fill. We are all very excited about Mike stepping in to fill the position and really look forward to his contributions. Congratulations Mike!

The website ([safd.org](http://safd.org)) continues to evolve and grow. Please send your thoughts, ideas, and recommendations for the website to SAFD Vice-President John Tovar ([vice-president@safd.org](mailto:vice-president@safd.org)). The website is there for the membership, please continue to use and improve it.

The Governing Body is currently planning our face-to-face meeting for October. If you have anything you would like us to address, email your member representatives. We are especially interested in gathering opinions on the new SPT format. Talk to your member reps—you elected them.

Geoffrey Kent, SAFD President

## MEMBERSHIP REPRESENTATIVE ELECTIONS

As you may know, we are nearing the end of another term for our membership representatives. This is your opportunity to elect your representatives to the Governing Body. All representatives will serve on the Governing Body and its various committees as well as help to shape the growth of the SAFD over the next three years. They are expected to participate in monthly conference calls, respond quickly to email communication, and travel biannually to onsite meetings. Our current membership representatives will conclude their terms on December 31, 2009.

As part of the election process, all nominees are given space in *The Cutting Edge* to express their thoughts about the various positions and share who they are with you.

### **...AND THE NOMINEES ARE:**

#### Fight Master Representative:



The last three years has seen the SAFD continue in the process of revitalization and modernization.

In addition to welcoming new members, the College of Fight Masters has significantly influenced reform, most notably in its proposal to ensure that Advanced Actor Combatant status incorporated both breadth of study as well as excellence in performance. As the organization's senior members, it is imperative that the CFM continues to strive to help the SAFD grow in the arena of training people to a professional level.

As FM Rep., I am honored to continue articulate the collective voice of the College of Fight Masters in terms of the continuing evolution of this Society whilst striving to ensure we do not lose sight of our core business: preparing professional level practitioners be they performers, teachers or fight directors.

**Richard Ryan**

#### Fight Director Representative:



The Governing Body has been working, tirelessly, on several projects important to SAFD Fight Directors.

- Talking with the SSD&C about possibly representing Fight Directors
- Bringing the Fight Directors Workshop back into the spotlight
- Having Fight Directors mentor those who have recently become one
- The creation of the Theatrical Firearms Certification program.

I believe all of these projects have helped the SAFD continue to march, boldly into the 21<sup>st</sup> century. I want to do what I can to help these projects, and others, become a viable and valuable part of the SAFD. I want the SAFD to be known in the theatrical world as the best of the best in both training stage combatants and fight directors. That's why I'm running to be your FD Rep.

**Michael J. Johnson**

Certified Teacher Representative:



A statement was not provided for this issue.

**DC Wright**

Friend/Actor Combatant/Advanced Actor Combatant Representative:



Hello- I'm Rob Smith, an Advanced Actor Combatant looking to become your Friend/AC/AAC membership representative. I acquired all eight weapon certifications in Las Vegas at the NSCW West from 2004-2007, working with an assortment of amazing instructors including FM's Mike Chin, Richard Raether, Richard Ryan, Chuck Coyl, Drew Fracher and many more. It was a great experience, and if you haven't done the NSCW I would highly recommend it because of the amount of time spent with some incredible instructors. My goals within the SAFD include attending at least three regional workshops a year (interning at some), teaching movement/combat at the university level and becoming a Certified Teacher by 2013. I recently moved to Cleveland, OH and hope to acquire more one-on-one time with instructors in the Northeast. I recently taught Voice, Shakespeare, and Stage Combat at Blue Lakes Fine Arts Camp in Twin Lakes, MI. I'm excited about the possibility for the future of the SAFD and my potential role of being your Friend/AC/AAC membership representative.

**Robert Smith** A Colorado native, Robert received his B.A. in Theatre Performance from The University of Nebraska, Lincoln. Robert recently received his M.F.A. in Theatre Performance from the University of Florida where he was seen in such productions as *Rhinoceros* (Dudard), *The Man of Mode* (Medley), *Vincent in Brixton* (Sam), and *Complete Works of Shakespeare-Abridged* (Jess). Robert is vigorous in his training and is an Advanced Actor Combatant within SAFD and also a member of the Equity Membership Candidacy Program. Robert has worked professionally at the Hippodrome State Theatre, Rough Magic Productions, Blue Lake Fine Arts Camp, and the Across Town Repertory Theatre. For more info visit [www.RobertMSmith.net](http://www.RobertMSmith.net).



It is an honor to be nominated as a Friend/AC/AAC Representative Nominee, and to be trusted to carry on the excellent work of Ted deChatelet. I've been an SAFD member since 2004, and take great joy in what the organization has taught me. In this position, I would like to find ways to extend the reach of the SAFD into areas where we currently have less of a presence; making it easier to find SAFD training and testing opportunities, without sacrificing the quality of the teaching that got us involved in the first place. My goals include more regional workshops, more SPR opportunities, and more experiments in workshop formats and timing.

Mike Speck is an Actor Combatant based in Minnesota. Since 2007, he has been the Mid-America Regional Representative for the SAFD. In this position, he co-founded the Carnage in the Corn workshop, and co-coordinated an SPR Blitz with CT Ian Borden at University of Nebraska – Lincoln. He has interned at Central Illinois Stage Combat Workshop, Winter Wonderland, and the Virginia Beach BASH. This fall he is returning to school for master's degrees in Arts and Project Management through St. Mary's University of Minnesota.

**Mike Speck**



*...continued from Cover*

**SAFD:** *How has involvement in the SAFD benefited you in your career?*

**MG:** Jean Tinguely lead me to the theatre. Tinguely's métamatic sculpture inspired me to pursue the kinetic aesthetic... and that is the theatre. Is it not? The SAFD appealed to me more than dance, more than commedia, more than circus. The SAFD and my love for design has provided an outlet for my creative drive and impulse.



**SAFD:** *Who are the people from whom you draw your greatest inspiration regarding your approach to staged violence, and why?*

**MG:** I would not be who I am without all of you. As theatre artists we develop ideas, share, observe in performance the growth and development of those ideas, and repeat. It all has to do with access. In the beginning it was the fight masters of the organization that provided inspiration and direction. As work and family life began to take up so much more of my free time it was the regional workshops that provided the inspiration. I had and have my screen heros but they pale in comparison to those Master teachers at the national workshops, the regional workshops, and the stage combat workshops at Louisiana Tech.

**SAFD:** *Outside of the SAFD, what additional training have you pursued?*

**MG:** Sports and martial arts are the chief contributors to my movement and training experience. I played baseball and football thru Junior High school. I quit both when I reached high school because I was small. So small the wrestling coach recruited me because I was the smallest guy in the ninth grade. No kidding, I wrestled at ninety-eight pounds and made weight easily. I was also a springboard diver for the swim team and did pretty well. In college I discovered soccer and gave up on the swim team to play ball.



My martial training is noteworthy for a variety of briefly studied styles. They include competitive sport fencing with Monituer de Escrima Don Stevens, Shotokan Karate, Wing Chung, Jeet Kune Do, Yang Style Taijiquan with Xing Dai at Louisina Tech, Aikido, Silat, Kali, and Sikal.

The greatest aspect of sports and martial arts training is that it allows one to be a student. I love being a student. Most important of all these are the opportunities to assistant and take classes with each other. I have learned a wealth of knowledge from standing across the floor as the TA, uke, and punching bag. It is those opportunities I welcome the most.

**SAFD:** *How has this training complimented the training provided by the SAFD?*

**MG:** I find that all my training, including the faculty men's basketball lunch league and pick-up soccer games with the international students at Louisiana Tech., has contributed very well. In fact it continues to provide the sustenance and foundation for my work.

**SAFD:** *What are some of advantages or disadvantages that you have come across with particular styles of training, either in yourself or the actors with whom you have worked?*

**MG:** I don't believe that any training is disadvantageous. Perhaps the better statement is not training is disadvantageous. All forms of training serve to inform the you, right?

Mark running his students through their paces

**SAFD:** *What has been your most challenging experience with staged violence as an actor, director, or choreographer?*

**MG:** Ruston, Louisiana is home to the Louisiana School for the Blind. I have had the unique opportunity to assist them on numerous occasions putting together fights for them. The most exciting was the knife and gun fight for an original script developed at the school. What an exciting opportunity to learn distance again for the first time, with your eyes closed. Distance based on sound and not visual stimuli.



**SAFD:** When working on a scene, what elements do you consider paramount in a partner?

**MG:** Conscious in the present moment.

Mark and Sarah Spivey, a Louisiana Tech alumni, at the 2009 SCW@LaTech in a class Janet Lawson, CT BASSC, was teaching



**SAFD:** What is the coolest move you have ever seen performed on stage?

**MG:** Simple communication with a partner. I can't remember what year it was, but I was watching the horse sweep thru the 1-10 battle of Boonesborough at *Bluejacket The Epic Outdoor Drama*. Jared Swanny rode Zima sideways and all the way down stepping off like Bugs Bunny at the last moment. As Zima hit the deck she rolled sideways and slide a few feet as Jared followed on his feet reins in hand. All this time the action on staged just sorta froze in time with folks looking like they were starring straight into the face of their own mortality. Those nearest were, "damned lucky not to be dead". But as the beast yielded to friction and tipped back towards her feet Jared was aboard and reined her to her feet, circled center stage and with a war cry broke the frozen masses to continue the attack with no injuries.

**SAFD:** What is your favorite film involving violence?

**MG:** I'm a Kurosawa fan and two of my favorites are *Throne of Blood* and *Yojimbo*.

**SAFD:** What about the violence in said film do you find enjoyable?

**MG:** Kurosawa's films have stunning visual elements combined with clear and concise story that make for a pleasurable viewing experience.

**SAFD:** Do you have a favorite weapon? If so, why?

**MG:** My work out pants, have you seen them? (pictured above) I don't really have a favorite weapon as I find juice with whatever the production needs.

**SAFD:** Where would you like to see the SAFD five years from now?

**MG:** Continuing its' significant growth in membership, rank, leadership in the industry, and aesthetic.

**SAFD:** What would you like to see the SAFD offer its members in addition to what they already do?

**MG:** It seems that we have all the tools for whatever we, as a membership, have asked for and perhaps it is more about what can we do for the SAFD. I think the SAFD is headed in the right direction as we see efforts made to open lines of communication within the membership. After all communication is the key to world peace, and if we really work to make it a priority are we not in fact providing a model for world peace?

**SAFD:** What would you like to see change about the SAFD?

I would like to see continued active participation by the membership in developing the future of this organization.

**SAFD:** How, do you think, can the SAFD better its relations with non-SAFD members?

By continuing to do what it has been by placing safety and quality foremost in our work.

**SAFD:** Using what you have learned so far on your journey, what advice would you give to someone just becoming interested in the SAFD?

**MG:** Train as much as you can. As my design professor used to tell me, "the first thousand drawings are always the hardest... they're due Monday." You learn by doing. So do... find the best out there and train with them. Always remembering that it's fundamentals, so train, train, train. Even the Dalai Lama said, "There isn't anything that isn't made easier through constant familiarity and training. Through training we can change, we can transform ourselves".

The cast of LIVING DEAD IN DENMARK, 2009



**SAFD:** *If you could do one thing over in either your training or involvement with the SAFD what would that be?*

**MG:** Find a way to spend more time with everybody, start playing soccer earlier in my career, started training with Ken when I first found him, and that time Mumaw and I stole Beardsley and Boushey's track suits for our skills test... well, I'd do that again.

**SAFD:** *What is your favorite restaurant in your city?*

**MG:** For crawfish, The Boiling Point in Ruston, Louisiana. If you're not looking for crawfish then I highly recommend 102 Bistro in Ruston. Tell the boys behind the sushi counter Rat sent ya.

**SAFD:** *If you were a fruit/animal/vegetable/inanimate object, what would you be and why?*

**MG:** A metal rat, of course! After all it is my Chinese zodiac.



Jennifer Powell, Skyler Holden, Rebecca Catalano, and Mark



Mark's induction ceremony at the 2009 NSCW

### **A TRIBUTE TO FIGHT MASTER, MARK GUINN**

From Drew Fracher, k. Jenny Jones, Brian Byrnes, Bill Lengfelder, and Jonathan Leverett

Mark was introduced to me during the early Outdoor Drama days. I spent the night on his floor during a visit to *Blue Jacket*. The police were called to the house due to a party brought on by our visit; he was asleep and had to wake up and explain about folks he didn't even know. **Politic.**

Attended the NSCW in 1985, where he and his partner snuck into Fight Masters rooms and stole clothes so they could impersonate them for their SPT. He was Maestro Boushey and wore that shiny, red polyester jump suit. **Hilarious.**

My wife passed away and he brought his Mom and was there within hours. They stayed for days and took care of me and so many things. **Steadfast.**

Asked me to be in his wedding and I watched as his family arrived, grew and thrived under his hand. **Provider.**



Mark, Hallie 'Gommie', & Matt



Introduced me to my new wife and amazing partner. Gave me a new lease on love. **Supportive.**

Took a small teaching job and turned it into a program to be reckoned with, building one of the best stage combat training programs around, birthing the annual Crawfish Boil workshop and training hundreds of students along the way. **Master Professor.**

Co-directed an epic outdoor drama with me and we rehearsed in the rain for two weeks. Watched him charm actors into thinking this was fun. **Salesman.**

Almost died of a brain aneurysm and survived, odds of one in thousands. Go figure. **Survivor.**

Continued to train and develop his own skills, to hone his teaching and choreographic chops and named a well-deserved Fight Master of the SAFD. The stories and adventures I've shared with him will last a lifetime, all of them good and growing in legend. How proud I am of my **Dear Friend and Compadre.**

Stay on your feet Ratty!  
FM Drew Fracher

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Mark Guinn and  
k. Jenny Jones at  
the NSCW 2009

There are those people in your life who affect you in unspeakable ways....his influence upon my philosophy, my art, my life is without measure.

One of my earliest experiences with Mark was back in 1988, when he and a friend confiscated my car keys and kidnapped me for a week of adventure. He took me climbing, we drove through the countryside-acting out the *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* comic books, we camped, sat around fires calling owls and drinking tequila. He has an unequalled love for life-- he taught me how to laugh, be spontaneous—the value of being carefree.

These last few years since his aneurism, he has demonstrated the underlying value that life indeed will knock you down, but it is about how fast you get back up. Frankly, he should be dead, yet he is stronger, more tenacious and beautiful than I can remember.

After over twenty years of his devoted friendship, I know him to be unmatched in his honor and steadfastness. One of the most radiant beings, he touches all. He is a leader of this organization, not because the College has inducted him, but because he is (and has been) followed-in method and spirit.

FM k. Jenny Jones

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Whenever I think of Mark Guinn, I see him, standing there next to David Leong (circa 1988 TTW) with a Smallsword clenched firmly between his teeth, as the two of them introduce and then demonstrate the Smallsword fight we all had to learn as aspiring teachers. Mark was David's assistant that summer. Mark and David's precision and clarity of action is still inspiring to me. It was, as is appropriate, a challenging fight to learn, and perform!

Mark is a man of honesty and integrity, and I appreciate his ability to cut-to-the-chase of a moment. He will look you squarely in the eye, and tell you what he thinks, in a very giving and productive way. He has great insight, bolstered by an extensive and extremely informed background in theatre . . . and life . . . and living. He keeps true to what is important to him. I respect him immensely.

FM Brian Byrnes

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I met Fight Master Guinn when he was running the National in Las Vegas in 1996. I went through a pretty horrendous personal upheaval that summer, and would never have made it through had I not had Fight Master Guinn to lean on.

Some years later, I took up fire spinning. As an inveterate martial artist/weapons' swinger, I was often curious about how fire spinning and the three-sectional-staff could be "married." Well....all I had to do was talk to FM Guinn at the Louisiana Tech Stage Combat Workshop, and he took the time and energy to construct a fire three-sectional right there in his backyard. A year later, FM Guinn not only created the fire whip, he created some pretty cool fire whip tricks, and he taught me some that were within the limits of my arthritis and physical stupidity.

I have known FM Guinn for 13 years. In that time, I have benefitted from his being my Spiritual Advisor and his willingness to try just about any wildass thing. I feel lucky to be in a Society that has the good sense to elevate someone as worthy as Mark Guinn to a post he deserves. I celebrate Fight Master Guinn's ascension to the College of Fight Masters (as I did when it elevated Fight Master K. Jenny Jones) as much as I celebrate the Society's obvious intelligence in elevating him to this post.

CT Bill Lengfelder

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### *The Grand Adventurer*

It's not often you meet a man whose grandmother taught him to throw tomahawks. Of course, when you do, you just know there will be something rather different and original about him. I first met Mark some years ago when he was teaching here in London at the British National Stage Combat Workshop, and was amazed at the imaginative and innovative way he led his students through their first experience of stage combat. His classes were full of what he would call "adventures". He packed in more material than I could have managed in twice as long, and still found time to let the students have a massage break for their newly aching shoulders. Material that was retained, too. When his class was finished, his students were glowing, not just from the physical workout, but with delight and newfound knowledge; they just couldn't wait to get back and drink in more adventures. His classroom is a place not simply for learning stage combat skills; it is a setting for a much broader experience, an underlying philosophy of respect for oneself and others. Now this may all sound rather serious, but actually, he makes everything FUN. You come out of his class feeling better about yourself, and about the world in general. And laughing, usually. Watching him work his magic, I found new inspiration to try to become a better teacher myself. Now, years later, I still watch his classes with awe (and take notes so I can steal as much as possible).



Staff from the 2007 Stage Combat Workshop at Louisiana Tech. with Mark Guinn, K. Jenny Jones, Jason Armit, Bob MacDougall, and Nigel Pulton (President of Australian SAFD)

His profound care for his students stands on a foundation of honor, respect and uncompromising honesty, rules by which he lives his life. And if you compromise those principles, believe me, he will let you know. Slacking and dishonesty don't last long around this man. He is astute enough to see the good and bad in everyone, but somehow always manages to bring out the best in us all. He is loved and respected by both his students and his peers. During the years he has been running the Louisiana Tech Regional workshop, many teachers, myself included, have travelled thousands of miles, year after year, to possibly the most geographically inaccessible workshop in the US, because he has charmed us and made our life better for knowing him. And when you meet his family, you can see those principles at work as you experience their gracious hospitality. Another wonderful teacher, K. Jenny Jones, says it best – she calls it a "pilgrimage".

It's so hard not to like Mark, because he's so interesting. And he's so interesting because he's always so interested. In you, your life, your subject, your ideas, in everything. When you talk to him, he makes you feel important, and to him, you are, whether you're a student, a fellow teacher, or someone he's just met by chance. Perhaps that's part of the secret of his success; he's such an exceptional teacher because, in spite of his huge fund of knowledge and extensive achievements, at heart he still remains a student. He is constantly studying, searching for new ideas, and striving to improve everything he does.

Whether he's traveling abroad to teach, or organizing the LA Tech Workshop, whatever the upcoming event, Mark will say he's "looking forward to the Grand Adventure", and the greatest thing is, we're all invited.

Jonathan Leverett  
President, British Academy of Stage & Screen Combat

PS

Some of us call him by his nickname of "Rat", and his famous aphorisms (well documented, I'm sure), have become known as "Ratticisms", and his method of distilling principles down to an easily memorable set of rules, "Ratology". The Ratalogical rule of stage combat, for example: "For God's sake, don't poke anybody in the eye!". When teaching his students shoulder rolls: "Don't worry – the first thousand are the hardest." Of Rapier & Dagger play: "Where's your dagger? Hope it ain't up your ass!" Perhaps you could do a glossary of Ratology!

# Central Illinois Stage Combat Report

Fights, Fun, Flesh Eaters and Freezy Pops

By: Jonn Baca



I had never heard of Eureka, Illinois. Hidden in the middle of the state, the small town's big claim to fame is that they are home to the college the Ronald Reagan attended and a Pizza Hut. It was at this college (pragmatically named 'Eureka College'), that I was involved in one of the most enjoyable Stage Combat workshops I've ever attended: The Central Illinois Stage Combat Workshop.



A Salute From the Entire Workshop

DC Wright and Holly Rocke run a fantastic workshop. Wright, along with H. Russ Brown acted as the principle instructors, with TA/Interns Jonn Baca (me), Glen Wall, and Caitlyn "Fight Pixie" Herzinger rounding out the staff. DC offered Glen and I a fantastic opportunity during the workshop. He gave us the morning time slot to teach a week long class in a weapon not covered in the SPT class. Glen jumped at the chance to teach Rapier and Dagger, and I took Broadsword and Unarmed. I can't say enough how wonderful it was to be able to teach in this setting. As someone who hopes to earn his CT, being able to teach in front of DC and H. Russ, and get feedback from them and the students, was priceless. I also found TA'ing DC, H. Russ, and Glen to be an excellent learning experience. I teach a certain way, and it is refreshing to learn new ways to present material, and pick up a fresh point of view.

The class numbered around sixteen students, which meant we could do everything in one space. The Pritchard Theater at Eureka served us well, with enough room to house the armory, the food, and classes. It was a welcome change from hiking from armory to class to lunch and back again. The dorm was less than a five minute walk from the theater as well. A short walk was welcome to me, as I was in charge of opening the space early in the morning. It was a one-stop shop of violence, and a logistical joy.

As three-week workshops go, this one was decidedly low-stress. Unlike the National Stage Combat Workshops, which tend to be very intense, the CISCW (or 'Cisco', as we called it), had a much easier flow. The class-load was manageable (generally only three a day, with a master class here and there), and several evenings off. This downtime was especially helpful in creating a sense of camaraderie among the staff and students. We would

play board games and video games in the evenings (you haven't lived until you see DC sing in 'Rock band'), or just hang out and talk. Special mention must be given to DC Wright and Christopher Elst, for providing the variety of board and video games. The students were able to step away from stage combat for a while, and come back to class the next morning mentally refreshed. As a TA, I found that the students didn't suffer from burnout as quickly, and allowed we teachers to move along with the classes. We didn't have to re-teach material nearly as much as I expected

Though we played hard, we worked hard as well. The first week started the SPT classes in Sword and Shield (with DC), and Smallsword (with H. Russ). I also taught my week-long introductory course in Broadsword (using the ultra-sexy Broadswords from Baltimore Knife and Sword), which worked really well with S&S. But the real treat the first week was the Unrehearsed Shakespeare Workshop, which was running alongside 'Cisco'.

Bill Kincaid of Western Illinois University came in, and took us through the training necessary to perform a complete Shakespearean script without blocking, memorization, or rehearsal. It was truly 'The Actor's Nightmare' come to life. Many of the students participated, and on Saturday afternoon we performed "Henry V" to an excited audience. It was a great kind of cross-training that took us out of worrying about being a fighter, and concentrated on being a receptive actor. I know I tend to get very 'Fight-centric' at workshops, and the Unrehearsed work reminded me I am an "ACTOR/Combatant", not just a combatant, and that listening to what was happening onstage might be useful. This work is a must for every actor, and once you get the thrill of performing without a net, you'll be hooked. For more information regarding Unrehearsed Shakespeare, go to <http://www.wiu.edu/theatre/bardinthebarn.php>.

Over the weekend DC piloted the massive passenger van to Bolingbrook, and many of the students and staff went out to eat and watch movies. It was a pleasant way to end the first week. There was little talk of stage combat, and we were able to put the workshop down for a day or

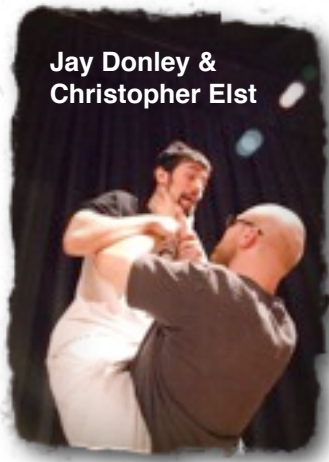
two, and just be a group of like-minded individuals enjoying some leisure time together.

Week two continued the students' education with the aforementioned SPT weapons, as well as my week long class in Unarmed. This week had the students and staff settling into the routine of the workshop: Wake up, eat, warm-up, fight, eat, fight, eat, play games, sleep, repeat. The inevitable minor plague started circulating around this time, and

alas, I caught it. Luckily, my TA/Intern Caitlyn was kind enough to do some of the more physical work so I could be an outside eye during class. (And not cough up a lung due to overexertion.) During lunch, we would watch stage combat related films. DC would put in the Dueling Arts instructional videos, or we would watch fights from movies. It was nice to have this kind of indirect exposure to combat during lunch. We could comment on what looked good, and reaffirm the things we learned earlier. It kept our minds working while our bodies rested. Not to mention that DC features prominently in the Dueling Arts videos, and we had a good laugh at his expense. (If you saw DC wearing a undersized cowboy hat whipping Michelle Ladd in the keester for being 'lazy', you'd laugh too.)

The weekend yet again found a group of us on an adventure in the van, this time to Normal, IL for food and more movies. It's really nice having the workshop during the beginning of Summer Blockbuster season. There's nothing like seeing action/adventure movies with a group of fight geeks. Another week down.

The final week had a sense of extreme anticipation; with a 'Mock SPT' adjudicated by Paul Dennhardt on Wednesday, and the real deal with Chuck Coyl that Friday. Glen Wall taught a Rapier and Dagger class in the morning. That was great, as it took people's minds off of the impending SPT, and forced them to focus on the task at hand. Glen likes to teach his R&D to look like the woodcuts and fight manuals, something I greatly enjoyed. It made the weapon look dynamic. The afternoon classes were devoted to rehearsal, and DC and Russ took time with each pair to give them notes. Every group received a fair amount of time with the instructors, so I think they had as close to one-on-one attention as one can get in a workshop setting. Wednesday came and the tension was high, it was Mock SPT time! We all performed admirably, and Paul informed us that we were where we needed to be for an SPT on Friday. He then worked bits and pieces of our Smallsword fight, using Alexander Technique (AT) to adjust us, and free our bodies from that pesky tension we carried. I loved watching Paul work his AT magic on people. Their bodies



Jay Donley & Christopher Elst

looked so graceful and elegant, and the tension they didn't even know they carried melted away. This Mock SPT was perhaps the single greatest exercise to prepare us for the actual SPT. People were extremely nervous, and the stress level was palpable. After we performed, the sense of accomplishment and release was welcome. Paul's notes and calming presence raised everyone's confidence, and put them in an expectant, rather than anxious, mindset. I am very glad that DC set this up, and that Paul was able to come. It helped the students a great deal. I hope other workshops adopt this practice, time permitting, it is most helpful.

Finally, the day arrived. Chuck showed up without warning, (I swear he's a ninja). After a lunch filled with anticipation, it was time to get the scenes started. Off we went, and all too soon, the scenes were done. That always amuses me: Weeks of training, hours of rehearsal, and the scene is done in minutes. Chuck took us through master classes in both Smallsword and Sword and Shield, and I was lucky (?) enough to be his meat puppet for Sword and Shield. For those who don't know, Chuck is efficient in his movements, and once you get the cue, you don't have time to consider your grocery list, you just need to MOVE.

After our master class, the 'grownups' went to confer, and Glen, Caitlyn, and myself, along with Holly Rocke, conscripted students to clean up the space and weapons, and get everything packed away. Everyone pitched in. We all then engaged in our final eating of the Freezy Pops, which were a staple food of the workshop, along with the barrel of cheesy poof balls that NEVER seemed to empty. I think they bred during the night.

Chuck returned, and we learned that all who tested passed! After Chuck said his goodbyes, we circled up for our final workshop meeting. The energy was touched with sadness, as this was the last day, and 'fight camp' was over. The students had nothing but good things to say about the workshop. Words like, "Awesome", "Epic", and "Fantastic" abounded. There was a sense of easy camaraderie among the students, with no animosity. It was a tight-knit group, and it's always nice to be a part of that dynamic. With hugs and a few tears, we left the theater and walked back to the dorms to pack and prepare to leave.

The events of the final night, while having nothing to do with stage combat, was so in keeping with the spirit of 'Cisco', that it bears telling. For the previous week, several of the students and staff created rules for a live-action zombie game to be played in the dorms where we were billeted. And on Friday night, the staff and many of the remaining students played it for about 2 hours. Cries of surprise and moans of 'Braaaaaains' filled the empty halls of the second and third floors as humans ran and hid in fear, and the flesh-eating undead stalked them. It was ridiculous, creative, and a heck of a lot of fun.

# The Games People Play

(Rehearsal Games & Approaches for Fight Scenes)



By: T. Fulton Burns

There are as many approaches to the rehearsal period as there are directors, actors and acting texts combined. Rehearsals are the time that we all look forward to because we truly get to do what we do best in theatre, which is “play.” The games and approaches in this article are intended to spice up the life of your stage combat scene and enhance the time spent in rehearsal; following the initial time period of learning choreography and discovering initial acting choices.

Many people see the rehearsal process as the time to work. I couldn’t agree more but, as stated before, our work is to play. As with most games there are rules and guidelines established to achieve the strongest clarity from all the players. Everyone must not only understand these parameters, but must also accept the restrictions necessary to play successfully.

Please note: Even with these intended safe techniques for developing fight scenes, it is important to consider safety at all times during this process and whenever possible have a CT, FD, or FM close at hand to provide further safety measures. Also, after completing these exercises, review and discuss the positives and negatives of what was discovered while playing.

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## Fight Scene Games

### 1. Slow Motion Action Theatre

A fun trick for working with choreography involves slowing it down to the point of exaggeration. The old *Six Million Dollar Man* or *Bionic Woman* series from the 1970’s serve as great reference points for the visual involved. (Try YouTube to see how this may look for those who are unfamiliar) Please note that this is not the same as an instructor asking for the fight to slow down for safety, but instead is a fun tool for acting purposes.

Slow motion exaggeration is the key to this technique. Even slower than Tai Chi speed, work through the choreography in its intended order. Take each moment to exaggerate every move with the entire body, including both physical and vocal reactions.

The purpose is to discover the intentions aimed toward catching the other character off of his/her guard and getting the upper hand. This also means that the partner will discover win moments during the choreography, prior to the final kill or injury moment. As these “Ah-Ha” moments (Wins) are found for one actor combatant while the “Oh-Crap!” moments (Losses) are found for the other. Remember that good acting equals reacting, so finding the key places for losses will help to sell the fight that much more.

Try varying the approach to this technique by running non-stop through the choreography from start to finish. The next time through the scene stop after discovering a Win and/or a Loss and start over again to create building blocks in the acting moments. Remember to play and have fun.

### 2. Give ‘em the Finger

The finger fighting technique is one of the oldest taught by those in the fight world. Whenever a fight calls for a weapon, take the time to slowly and safely work through the choreography in an environment completely removed from the black box/rehearsal space. The only tools needed for the actor combatants will be their fingers and hands. This method allows actors to walk through fight choreography for reminder techniques. The following have been used to represent weapons:

- Both the index and middle fingers touching and extended to represent any sword
- A single index finger may be used for either a dagger or a knife
- The back of the forearm may be used to represent a shield
- Two fists may be used to represent a quarterstaff (extend an arm for long form)
- A fist may represent a buckler (for work outside of the needs of a skills test)

The key to this form of play is visualizing where the parts of the weapons exist. Determine where the true edge of the sword is in relation to the fingers. This decision will help to ensure the accuracy of specific moves and avoid potentially sloppy choices when returning to work with the weapon. One major benefit is that this all takes place in a far more relaxed atmosphere and can be practiced in a living space without risking great harm to the space or any other people. The speed for this process is generally slow as it is intended to help with recalling the choreography.

### 3. Using your Noodle

Performing choreography with foam materials is absolutely fun! Some sword distributors now market foam swords for the process of learning stage combat. An inexpensive way to do this work is to purchase a pool noodle from any discount store during the summer season.

A full length pool noodle can represent a quarter-staff  
A noodle may be cut to represent a sword  
Smaller pieces may be cut to create daggers or knives

Try the fight choreography with your new foam weapons. One approach to working with foam weapons could be taking the time to work through the choreography, much like with finger fighting. Spatial requirements can remain in tact with far less dangerous tools.

Another process could be working with the choreography at the highest speed truly desired. The benefit is that mistakes will be made. These mistakes help the actor to see where they can make improvements in their work. As these moments are found make notes. When returning to the actual weapons one or more potential problems can be removed.

### 4. There Can Be Only One

Another way to use pool noodles relates to developing and discovering fighting abilities. This game involves partners dueling with pool noodle weapons.

Find an area with a partner that is free of any obstacles. The goal is to use the chest as the target. Start with the weapons in the on guard stance and do what ever is necessary to touch the target without being touched. With the chest being the target, each partner will truly try to hit the chest of the other individual before their own chest is hit. There must be full commitment to this game, and remember that giving up during the fight is not acceptable. The idea should relate to people fighting for their lives. Consider the moves which have been taught during training to increase the knowledge of why they are used. The downside of noodles is that they are not as sturdy, but the idea is to have fun and find variances in fighting styles.

There are fun casualties that need to be considered as well. If any limbs are hit, then they are no longer allowed to be used. The following are common events during this game:

- A sword arm is hit resulting in the weapon needing to be used in the non-dominant hand to continue the fight. If this occurs, the injured arm must be placed behind the back in order to avoid the temptation to reuse it.
- A leg has been hit, which will now require the good leg to support all upright activity. Yes, it looks silly, but the goal is also to have fun.

- Both legs have been hit, restricting all movement from the legs. (Unless someone has mastered the art of levitation and if you have, then please make me aware of the next workshop you will be teaching so that I may enjoy your knowledge)
- If both arms are lost, then I have seen people place the weapon between their legs and continue to fight. I even watched a high school student win with this technique!

During this game there are no "time outs" when adjusting for any of the above listed injuries, so always stay on guard!

There is one target that is always off limits and that is the face. Even though these are pool noodles, the possibility of an eye being hit could still occur.

Finally, observe that honesty is the best policy with this game. If someone has been hit, please honor that moment in the fight. Changing, or neglecting to honor the rules of the game only frustrates others. (We all remember the kid who took their ball home because they weren't winning the game.)

For large groups, get others involved so that a *Highlander* experience may take place. Have the group form a circle for the fighting/playing space. As each winner is decided per round, keep note of who is still in the running. The winners will partner up with the next fight, but for the sake of the fun, both are now completely healed following their last matches. Continue with process until one final winner is determined.

In this group situation it is important to experiment with different fighting styles as well as watching others' techniques. This is a great opportunity to steal ideas from fellow actor combatants and discover tactics that work as well as those that fail, and why.

### 5. Making your Mark

Washable magic markers as a training tool is quickly becoming another fun way of exploring fight skills. In a knife fight anything can happen. The markers are relatively close in size to knives and can help to reveal where things can get too close. Solid white clothing or light colored clothes are the best for this exercise because the color of the markers is clearer. Each performer gets a different colored marker to determine who has what knife.

Working with full intensity through the choreography with markers can demonstrate where there is a risk of getting cut during this close-quarters style of fighting. Whenever a mark is left on an opponent, students can see where adjustments will need to be made for the fight. The other benefit will be a better handling of the weapon. Everyone should take note of the marks left on their person. The respect for these types of knife fighting issues does not just exist for how partners interact, but also addresses how students can be a danger to themselves.

## 6. Marker Mayhem

Using two different colored Machine Washable Markers, and a plain white T-shirt, partners will participate in a safe knife fight. The rules are as follows:

- There is a time limit of 60 seconds. (Set a timer as everyone will be quite busy)
- The target is to cut (mark) the opponent's chest/ torso (white shirt) as many times as possible during the time limit.
- The obstacle is to avoid being cut (marked) while trying to achieve the goal.

This exercise provides a great cardio workout and also a ton of fun. I have yet to see anyone not get cut by their opponent, and in most cases I have seen people accidentally cut themselves as well. The controlled environment gives the closest demonstration of a knife fighting experience without the danger.

With large groups take turns. Watch others to learn their approaches to this game determine what works the best.

## 7. What IF...?

Performing the choreography with alternative outcomes gives strong fight intentions. This technique may be used with any of the above mentioned tools (pool noodles or markers), or some instructors allow students to practice this technique with the actual stage combat weapons.

The process requires that the actors work through the choreography at a Tai Chi Speed to ensure that safety is in place at all times. The amount of time will determine how long this exercise can be used. The premise is that the actors act out the fight with intentions while allowing blows, which are normally parried, blocked, or evaded, to actually land in a controlled fashion. This will reveal to the actors how this fight could go if the fight went as the character wished.

For instance in a traditionally set piece of blocking the action could be staged as follows:

A B

Right hook to B's head > Duck evasion

Let's assume that several moves, or perhaps an entire phrase, have preceded this current step in the choreography. At this moment the actors could decide what may happen if the intended events were to land and even act out the actions as follows:

A B

Right hook to B's head > Fails to evade punch and the punch lands on left side of face, Provide suitable response to injury.

The idea is to discover the intentions of the moves provided within the choreography.

If time is limited, then pick two to three places where the action will land. If there is ample amounts of time, then try this technique with the entire fight. Actors receiving the attack will help by acting out the reaction to the blow. This may result in an early kill or an injury, but this can answer the questions for the actor and character "What if this attack landed?" or "Why do I even do this move?" The result can reveal the danger in making a wrong move at any point and time in the fight.

For fights with weapons I have seen partners replacing the traditional stage properties with pine dowels or plastic golf tubes. The speed and energy levels are keys to the success of this exercise. When making any physical contact there is the ability to continue to hold the safety in place. Pretend that damage is done to both partners. This will be better than a game of Cops and Robbers.

## 8. The Tides Have Turned

DC Wright turned me onto the idea of looking for the changes in momentum within fight choreography as a rehearsal tool. The process provides great physical cues in the choreography for finding the wins and losses while helping problem solving skills in learning the fight effectively. Within fight choreography there are a series of actions (perhaps 3-5 moves at a time or perhaps a single move) lead by one character over the other where they are "winning" the fight. At some point the momentum will change, allowing for the losing character to have a series of dominating moves. This usually is found by determining a shift in direction based on advances and retreats in action.

Take the time to find these moments of change, either by looking at the fight on paper or while working through the fight. Now work each section individually from the top of the fight. Upon completing each momentum section the actors are to shift to the next section in the fight and focus only on that portion.

Having worked through the fight in bite size bits from the beginning to the end, piece the entire fight together from the end. This does not mean fighting in complete reverse, like rewinding a movie, but rather like reading a book's chapters in reverse order. Then add each previous moment of the fight until the entire fight has been completed in its correct chronological order.

A major benefit with this tool is finding a fight's natural speed in a more comfortable fashion.

### Acting Tools for Fight Scenes

#### 1. Opposites can be Attractive

No matter what kind of piece is being performed, consider a new look by playing the polar opposite. Within comedy there is often tragedy and within tragedy there is often comedy, so a fresh point of view might be just what is needed to discover new ways to play a scene.

Some young actors find this to be a tough technique because what they are playing no longer “feels right” to them. While it is possible that the results may not work, it is more honest to say that this process is just unfamiliar to the normal approach to a scene. Still, a silly comical approach to *Richard III* may present a far more horrific character in the scene. By approaching *Fortinbras* with a dramatic or perhaps even tragic approach the performers may very well create one of the funniest environments ever discovered for this story. Step back and take a different acting approach to the overall scene and see what results may be found.

## 2. She's Not My Type & He's Not Either

Another fresh point of view can be playing opposite of the character type. A different psychological approach to a character could be as simple as changing the perspective of a weak character to one that is ultra strong. This will help in finding more highs and lows for a character.

The physical approach to the character type can also be successful. Using Laban efforts will enable an actor to alter a character through a few physical adjustments. Determine which of the following movement efforts relates to the character:

Space:	Direct or Indirect
Weight:	Strong or Light
Time:	Sudden or Sustained
Flow:	Bound or Free

Once it has been determined how the character moves, based upon the above listed options, then list the four opposites and play one, two, three or all four different physical approaches to see where this takes a character.

The point of these approaches is to provide another way to consider a character's point of view. We, as actors, can place our own myopic views on who the character is, which is our way of suiting the character to us instead of the actor to the character. Relax and walk a mile through a character's potentially new shoes.

## 3. Release Your Inner Animal

Animal Essence work gives another acting approach to a character. Consider an animal's movement pattern and apply it to the scene work. Take a look back at the character analysis to determine the key animal that best fits. A good frame of reference for this technique may be found in *Star Wars Episode 1 - The Phantom Menace*. The character Darth Maul has a great moment of a caged lion eyeing its prey.

One trick involves the level at which this animal essence is played within the scene. During the initial run, take the animal essence to fullest extent possible and make a mental note of this level being 100%. From this point on play with other levels such as 50%, 25% etc... There may be some levels that are more effective at different points throughout the scene.

A further suggestion is to locate three different types of animals to play within the scene. Two may be related to the character, but the third should be as far from this type as possible. Below are some examples.

Bear	Cockroach
Tiger	Rat
Butterfly	Dove

Run the scene three times, choosing one specific animal type to play each time. The test is to fully commit to all of these perspectives, especially the one that seems the least likely to succeed. Let the moments evolve to find new things about a character via the animal movement, and ignore the critical voice saying “I know this one won't work and I will prove how this idea is wrong.” Just experiment with all of the options. It may be that a collection of all three animal essences creates the most dynamic character.

## 4. Make It Up

After performing a scene with the dialogue, as intended by the playwright, it can be hard to see the forest for the trees. To combat this, run the fight scene without the written text, improvising the lines while keeping the basic story. Let words flow freely while performing the choreography established by the fight instructor. Here it is the words/ideas that change and not the action.

Try this at least twice with completely different lines of dialogue for each instance. The freshness will enhance the rehearsal environment and provide a great opportunity to discover unknown subtext that may be applied to the scene. This process of improvisation may give a chance to think of the scene differently and rejuvenate performances.

## Final Thoughts

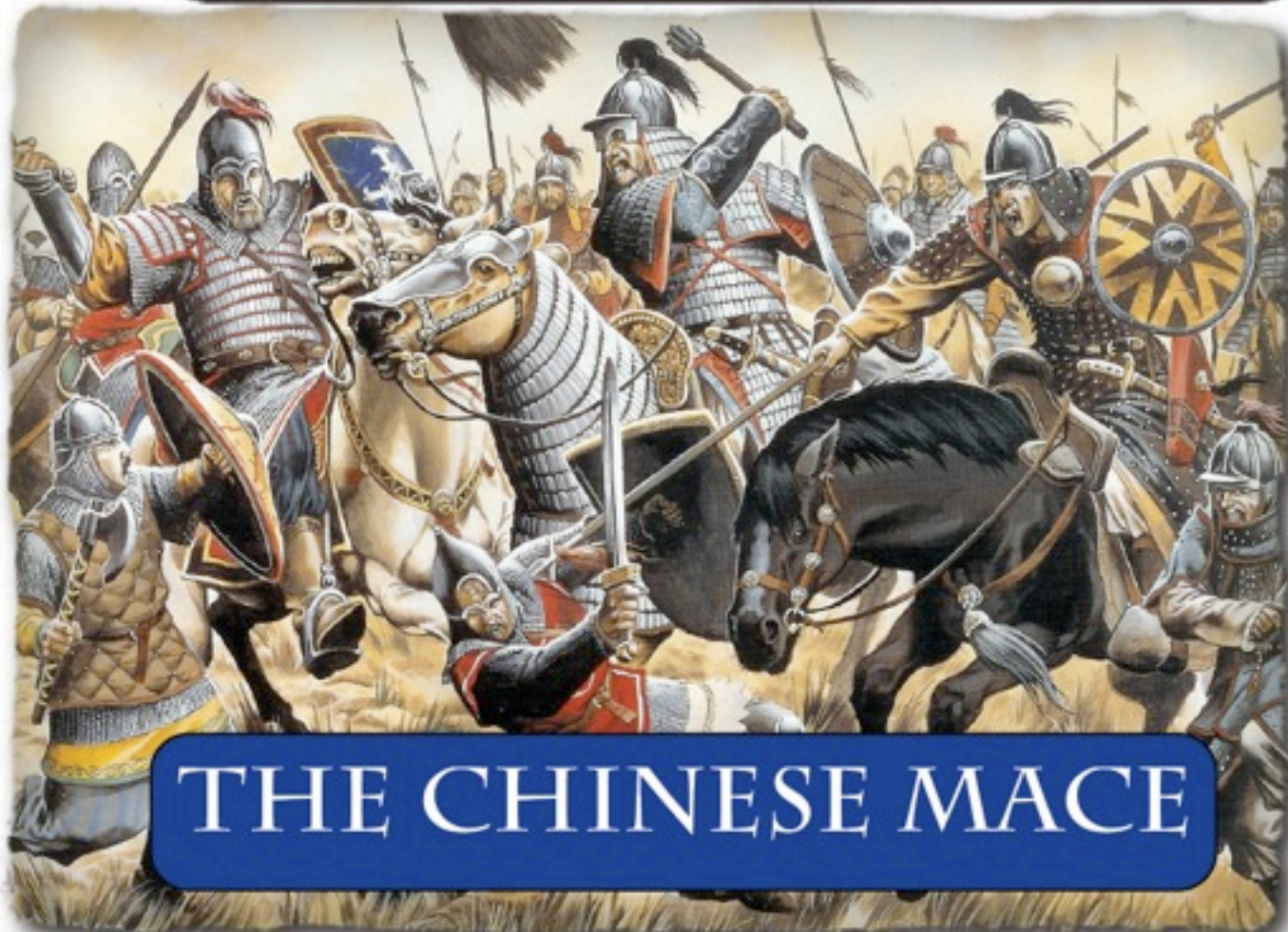
Pick and choose the games that suit the fight needs best. It may be best to just pick one at random to see what could develop within the fight scene and acting work. The important thing is to remember that our work is to continue to develop our ability to play. Make sure that fun is part of the rehearsal process and look for new ways to play while working a fight scene.

If you have any additional games or techniques not listed in this article, please feel free to submit them to [t\\_fulton\\_burns@yahoo.com](mailto:t_fulton_burns@yahoo.com) with the title “Games People Play” in the subject line. These games will be compiled for a future article.

Fulton Burns is an Advanced Actor Combatant and the Director of Acting & Performance at the University of South Alabama's Department of Dramatic Arts



# Tools of the Trade



## THE CHINESE MACE

Photo: [www.medieval2.heavengames.com](http://www.medieval2.heavengames.com)

"Relying on light, mounted bowman who could travel long distances rapidly, even in adverse conditions, the Mongols were able to bring opponents to battle on their own terms. They employed tactics of surprise and terror to such effect that many towns simply surrendered to them rather than risk the wholesale slaughter of their citizenry. Only the capricious nature of the Mongol dynastic succession saved western Europe from utter devastation." - *Weapon, A Visual History of Arms and Amor.*

The Chinese Mace was carried by the Mongols during their reign over China from 1279-1368 - *Weapon, A Visual History of Arms and Armor*

The Chinese Mace also called the "assassin's mace" is the English translation of "shashou jiang," a term of ancient Chinese strategy. - *Chinese Geostrategy: "Assassin's Mace."*



1200 A.D.  
CHINA

# National Stage Combat Workshop

THE 2009 NSCW REPORT

BY: CT ANGELA BONACASA

...and two were as one.

After several years of both East and West locations for the National Stage Combat Workshop (NSCW), the NSCW was back to a single location for 2009, with the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, N.C. acting as the sole NSCW sponsor. Although our NSCW relationship with the University of Nevada Las Vegas is over for the time being, nothing will ever change the twenty plus years of history and great experiences that we have had there. 2009 also saw a new combination of workshops at the NSCW, with the Introduction to Stage Combat (ISC), Actor Combatant Workshop (ACW), and Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop (AACW) together in the same summer.



## 2009 NSCW Staff:

Coordinator: Angela Bonacasa  
On Site Coordinator: Dale Girard  
Head Teaching Assistant: Paul Dennhardt  
Head Intern: Jessica Dunne

## Fight Masters:

J. David Brimmer (ACW Unarmed)  
Michael Chin (ACW Rapier and Dagger)  
Richard Raether (ACW Broadsword, AACW Smallsword)  
k. Jenny Jones (AACW Coordinator)

## Teaching Assistants:

Paul Dennhardt (assisting Jones)  
Tiza Garland (assisting Raether in ACW)  
Brian LeTraunik (assisting Brimmer)  
Bob Macdougall (assisting Raether in AACW)  
Darrell Rushton (assisting Chin)

## Interns:

Jessica Dunne  
Jonathan Jolly  
Marianne Kubik  
Craig Lawrence  
Adam Noble  
Barbara Seifert

## ISC Participants:

John Esslinger  
Laura Hall  
Bryn Harris  
Drew Madland  
Josh Parrott  
Jason Via  
Tommy Walsh

## ACW Participants:

Ed Baker  
Sarah Beeson  
Michael Biggs  
Sarah Billard  
Elia Brovarone  
Alexander Burns  
Jessica Chan  
Jeffrey Colangelo  
Matthew Crider  
Michael Curran-Dorsano  
Ray Eddy  
Alex Escher  
Joey Fechtel  
Luke Fedell  
Norman Ferguson  
A.J. Gagliardi  
Rachel Gelfeld

David Goyette  
Kimberly Greenawalt  
Connor Hammond  
Angi Hanan  
Jon Harvey  
Rafi Hernandez-Roulet  
Will Honea  
Alex Jeffery  
James Jekin  
Lauren Koch  
Carlos Lopez IV  
Emily Lynn  
Jason Michael Pasqua  
Lloyd Mulvey  
John O'Hagan  
Patrick Osteen  
Merry Peterson  
Jessica Rogers  
Nick Santana  
Trent Saunders  
Laura Smiley  
Reid Smith  
Bennett Walton  
Ian White  
Russ Woron-Simons

## AACW Participants:

Mirle Criste  
Danette Baker  
Chris Beaulieu  
Trevor Day  
Brian Evans  
Charlton B. Gavitt  
Maria Henriksen-DeHoff  
Erica Ikeda  
Nathan Mitchell  
Jenny Male  
Michael Mueller  
Jay Peterson  
Mark Rosenthal  
Elizabeth Styles  
Sterling Swann  
Trevor Swann

In this time of economic uncertainty, the SAFD and UNCSA approached the summer with quiet optimism, hoping that despite the shaky economy people would still decide to spend their summer slinging steel. Luckily, that's exactly what happened, and we had a great big group of awesome participants this summer. With seven students in the ISC, forty-two students in the ACW, and sixteen in the AACW, the NSCW was brimming with participants this summer.

In the ISC, students received 10.5 hours in all eight SAFD disciplines. They began with Unarmed (Rushton), Broadsword (Garland / Macdougall), Quarterstaff (LeTraunik) and Single Sword (Garland), then transitioned to Rapier and Dagger (Macdougall), Smallsword (LeTraunik), Sword and Shield (Macdougall), and Knife (Dennhardt/Rushton). Movies were again a part of the curriculum, as *The Sea Hawk*, *The Mark of Zorro*, and other classic swashbuckling films were shown on the big screen. Master classes were a big part of the ISC as well, with at least one evening master class offered in each week.

ACW students hit the ground running with Rapier and Dagger from Mike Chin and assistant Darrell Rushton, Unarmed from David Brimmer and assistant Brian LeTraunik, and Broadsword from Richard Raether and assistant Tiza Garland. Week one was supplemented by Knife classes with Bob Macdougall, and moved into Growtowski classes, taught by Darrell Rushton, during week two, and classes specifically geared toward SPT choreography in week three.

As to be expected, the AACW began the workshop at a high level of intensity, and it never let up. With renewals in the first week, an SAFD Gun Safety Certification course, SPTs in Smallsword, Broadsword and Shield, and Knife, and many other classes, the AACW never stopped. Whether an SPT class, Alexander or Feldenkrais, or Film Fighting, the AACW students were incredibly dedicated, and worked their collective butts off.

Merchandise night was a welcome relief from all the work, and appearances by Lewis Shaw, Walter Triplette, and a whole bunch of SAFD swag allowed people to pick up cool clothes and "theatrical props". The highlight of Merchandise Night, of course, was the official swearing in of Mark "Rat" Guinn as the newest member of the College of Fight Masters. Presented to the membership by Senior FM on staff Richard Raether, Mr. Guinn gave a heartfelt speech that led to tears and a standing ovation from everyone in attendance. It was a wonderful night.

But all workshops must come to an end, unfortunately, and all too quickly it was time for the closing ceremonies. The ISC ceremonies came first, with awards and certificates handed out to the students, along with special prizes. Many of them stayed to watch the conclusion of the ACW SPTs, as well as attend the closing ceremonies, which took place shortly after the end of an epic day of SPT testing.

The presentation of the official NSCW awards and Broadway Cares, Equity Fights Aids (BCEFA) drawing closed out the ceremonies, with the NSCW students and staff raising almost \$1600 for BCEFA. From there, the party moved to the Celtic Cafe, where staff and students ate and drank before going back to the apartments to close out a great workshop.

#### **NSCW Awards:**

Paddy Crean Award: Chris Beaulieu  
Douglas Fairbanks Jr. Award: Michael Mueller  
Founder's Award: Connor Hammond  
Ian McKay Award: Joey Fachtel  
Irene Ryan Award: James Jelkin  
Swashbuckling Award: Ray Eddy and Michael Mueller  
Best Female Performer ACW: Sarah Beeson  
Best Male Performer ACW: Michael Curran-Dorsano  
Best Scene ACW: James Jelkin and Nick Santana for *Hamlet*  
Best Female Performer AACW: Jenny Male  
Best Male Performer AACW: Nate Mitchell  
Best Scene AACW: Trevor Day and Jenny Male for *Antony and Cleopatra*

2009 was my last summer as NSCW Coordinator, and I would like to thank all the students and my incredible staff for making my final year such a memorable one. I have absolutely loved my time as coordinator, and am thankful to the various Governing Bodies for giving me the opportunity to give back to the organization that has given me so much. I will hold these past 5 summers in a special place in my heart, and hope that I have been able to give the NSCW students the same kind of amazing, intensely fun, and life transforming experience that the NSCW was for me. I pass the torch on to CT/FD Mike Mahaffey, and wish him the best of luck as he takes the Coordinator position and makes it his own. It's quite the gift, Mike. Treat it well.

I'd also like to thank Dale Girard for all his support as OnSite Coordinator, and his years of helping me find my way. Thank you as well to Mary Jane Degnan and Teresa Prevatte at UNCSA for all their incredible help in making this workshop run; it wouldn't exist without you.

It's all yours now, Mike. I'll be checking my email with great interest next summer, and living vicariously through my edition of the Pickle!

# ACTOR COMBATANT WORKSHOP REPORT

## BY: MICHAEL BIGGS

The Actor Combatant Workshop hosted by the Society of American Fight Directors held at the University of North Carolina School of the Arts in Winston-Salem, N.C. consisted of forty two students brought together with the intent of learning safe violence. We were taught Unarmed combat, Rapier and Dagger, and Broadsword predominantly, with master classes throughout the nineteen day workshop ranging from the Alexander Technique to Swashbuckling. Surrounded and supported by roughly eight skilled interns, three Certified Teachers with the SAFD, Fight Directors, members of the College of Fight Masters, and the President of the SAFD, the workshop engaged in teaching theatre at one of it's most dangerous points. The length of the workshop was designed to allow actor combatant trainees the sufficient amount of hours to test and be recognized as an Actor Combatant with SAFD. So like an audition, a thesis, or even just something for ourselves, we set out to make a show worth watching. From dawn until past the sunset for six days a week, the sweat, gunfire, thrusts, parries, and camaraderie flowed through the rehearsal and performances spaces . . . the seventh day, we went to the movies.



Michael Biggs



John O'Hagan

Of the forty two students, there were accomplished martial artists, wrestlers, gymnasts, ballroom dancers, jugglers, and people with all levels of movement theatre knowledge, but a common vocabulary had to be established. Like any field of study, drills were introduced early on to begin physical memory training for the most basic responses to protect an oncoming attack, along with a warm up including many different styles of physical movement encouraging strength, stamina, flexibility, and focus, affectionately known as the "Dance of Death". The reminder to breathe constantly filled the room as each and every one of our coaches continually built a foundation for providing safety. I felt the greatest advice came from a simple lesson that can be carried into all aspects of theatre: make your partner look good. Evenings provided the opportunity to see the renewal examinations for the Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop students. As they worked broadsword, unarmed, and rapier/dagger routines, it gave us a vision of what was to come.

Horror stories in theatre about a mis-timed punch, a poorly placed contact slap, or any number of painful accidents that occur when otherwise simple combat actions are unsafely executed, are common. Unlike the motto "no pain, no gain", this gathering of talent found the way to "create the illusion" of pain and violence without actually hurting anyone. "Create the illusion" was spoken by Richard Raether, our Broadsword instructor and choreographer, as one of his most important rules when working on stage combat. FM Raether, like many of the Fight Masters, informed us during a small Q & A, that his mishap experience lead to his decision to pursue more safe and effective methods in the combat business.

What made this workshop truly stand out was the expectation that Actor Combatant training needed a strong commitment to Actor training, insisting that the two pieces are codependent, and both are necessary to truly "create the illusion". Fight Master David Brimmer, our choreographer /instructor for the Unarmed, took the most time to detail that out for us. While in the midst of a fight, it's difficult to remember to react to something little when a huge uppercut is coming, but Brimmer and others were unbending on their ideas that a single sequence of events is necessary to tell the story, and that sequence should be scored down to the breath.

The second week started out with a bang as we had SAFD President Geoff Kent give a two day master class in Firearm Safety for the Stage. Informative . . . explosive . . . good times. By the end of the second week we had the broadsword parry with the forehead down, worn muscles, bruises covering any number of visible places . . . a few to the ego as well, and a surprise class in which FM Brimmer was brought in to R&D to act as a director viewing us at a stage combat "callback" (needless to say not our most notable moment). A once in a lifetime event aimed toward helping reengage the heart of the training, Mark "Rat" Guinn was honored as the newest member in the College of Fight Masters. There happen to be, what, sixteen in the country? Sure, we may witness a few more in our lifetime, but for "Ratty", that was his night. Cheers Mark! Of course, we were also drooling at the tables behind the ceremony, where lay beautiful weap..err.. merchandise for sale. Free fezzes went to those who purchased a sword and/or dagger. If you caught the right moment, I heard that



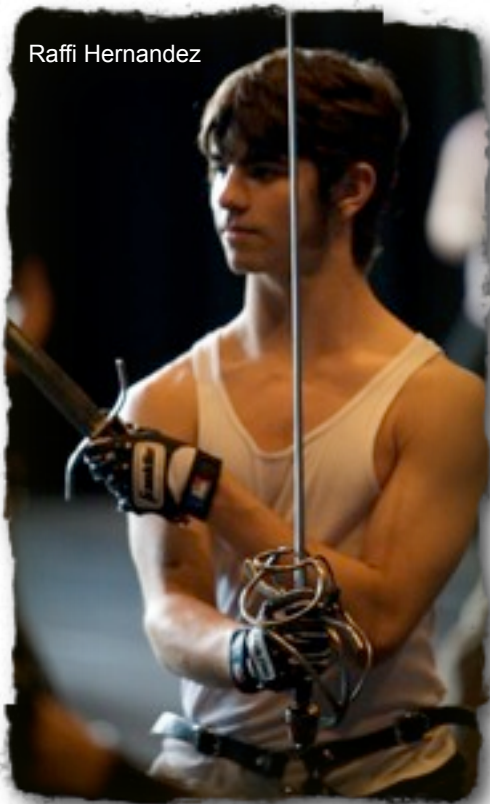
Connor Hammond and Trent Allen Saunders  
in a R&D SPT

FM Brimmer balanced a sword on his head, and I watched Maria Henriksen-DeHoff belly dance her way to the floor while a perfectly balanced cutlass was...well...perfectly balanced on her head.

The third and final week consisted of preparations for the skills proficiency tests. Scenes were chosen from a number of locations. From Shakespeare to J.M. Barry to the writers of the first Star Trek television series and the Hercules series, fights were found from the most common to the most obscure places. While in an actual production Kate and Bianca may never engage in a rapier and dagger contest, it sure made the scene a lot of fun to watch. There was also a level of enjoyment brought to the stage as Buzz Lightyear and Woody fought unarmed, Will Turner and Jack Sparrow took up rapier & daggers, and Gaston and the Beast went at each other with broadswords as if their lives depended on it. For those drawn to fights in more modern setting, *Sexual Perversity in Chicago*, *Angels in America*, and *Pillowman* were all very effective battlegrounds. Arguably the most entertaining pieces fell from the Unarmed Combat Skills Proficiency Test. As most of these had the same choreography, with only minor adjustments made to fit the requirements of a scene, it was challenging to make certain that there was life in the work. Just to acknowledge a few, the scene from *Rounding Third* included some incredible comedic timing while giving full weight to the gravity of the fight, a tussle between Peter Pan and his Shadow had an unmatched playfulness, the rip-your-heart-out scene from *Pillowman* in which the two actors breathing was heard in the lobby with the stillness in the house, and a gadget filled, extra characters added, sound effects included fight for the Enterprise that stole the show!

While picking up new weapons, we may have appeared to be a calamity ridden group of theater junkies, but outside, in the halls, the talent quotient was off the charts. There were no less than five jugglers, comedic songs were written in tribute to our Rapier and Dagger instructor and choreographer FM Michael Chin, there were random demonstrations of martial arts or gymnastic abilities, and vocal talent could be heard singing anything from Broadway, to Disney, to anything pop culture over the last 30 years.

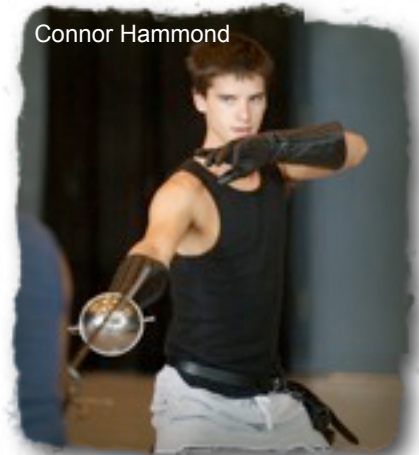
As I write this, none of the combatants know if they passed . . . and that's okay. Certainly we would all like to be recognized by the SAFD as Actor Combatants. We just spent enough time, sweat, blood, and tears for it. In truth though, we attended this conference for two basic reasons; we wanted to learn more about stage combat, and we wanted to have a good time improving ourselves for the career we love. I saw forty two people accomplish both goals, pass or fail. Parting, as they say, is such sweet sorrow . . . well, Facebook is already filled with people looking for ways to get in their next fights.



Raffi Hernandez



James Jenkins beating up on Craig Lawrence in the obstacle course



Connor Hammond



Ed Baker & Sarah Billard

# ADVANCED ACTOR COMBATANT WORKSHOP REPORT

BY: MICHAEL MUELLER

I've been a member of the SAFD for nearly ten years, and have always heard that the the NSCW is the best training available for those interested in stage combat. From my first experience training with a CT in my undergraduate education, I have had a strong desire to attend; however, I was surprised when I was advised against attending by my undergraduate CT. They had attended the AACW but found so little attention devoted toward the acting component of stage combat, that they didn't feel it was worth the time or money.

It's a great pleasure to report that this aspect has greatly changed from when my undergraduate CT attended. Through the hard work of the staff of this year's NSCW, the emphasis on acting staged violence rose to meet the level of conditioning and technical training the NSCW has always had. Some might view this shift as a new, kinder, gentler workshop, but the reality is that this focus adds to the intensity because it is demanded in addition to the skill and conditioning. In the past, these workshops have been regarded as the place to go to test in as many weapons as time would allow. This year reduced the quantity of training and increased the quality across the board.

"I learned so much about myself as a fighter, as an actor, and as an educator." Charlton B. Gavitt

renewal it became clear that simply performing the choreography was not enough to warrant a recommended pass. It was not enough to show your ability with a weapon on stage. There had to be a clear sense of character, a scene, with or without words, and intensions driving each act of violence. These were not given to us, but rather left

up to us to work out with our partners as we learned the choreography.

Depending on how you view renewals, this may seem unnecessary, but as actor/ combatants I feel strongly that both sides should be demonstrated with each opportunity to renew. Just as the SPT requires a scene, having conflict with characters fighting for something only elevates the quality of the renewal. It also provides members the opportunity to create and perform, which should be viewed as positives for actors, teachers and directors.

Regardless of the background of the participants at this year's NSCW, there was something for everyone. From training in all the weapon styles, to applying Alexander techniques, tonal architecture, learning gun safety with theatrical firearms, utilizing Grotowski and Feldenkrais into staged violence application, blood effects, film fighting, and learning choreography techniques, this workshop had everything past workshops did, but so much more.

The days were long, tiring, and draining for everyone, but when you put it into perspective, this is the best workshop devoted to this art form. 10-12 hours per day, six days a week with some of the finest teachers in the world is truly an experience I wish for anyone with a passion for stage combat. This year the bar was raised regarding what the NSCW can be, and from this success, I'm sure next year will be even better. The SAFD has always stood for the promotion of excellence in the area of stage combat, and this year the NSCW embodied this philosophy to the utmost, pushing the limits of their students and staff to achieve greatness in all areas of this art form.

I can't wait to get back.

"This AACW (my third in a row) was the best yet. The workshop was less about putting the students through a purely physical ordeal; instead, it took new approaches that made it more mentally and artistically challenging. For the first time I had a sense of being involved in a type of "continuing education," that I would anticipate returning to.)" Sterling Swann



Danette Baker & Adam Noble  
locked in a Knife SPT

We still tested in three weapons, AAs had opportunities to renew in the other five, but with the first

# Regional Reports

A Look At Our Membership Around the World

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## East Central Region:

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Washington D.C.



By: Ray Rodriguez  
e: [ECRegRep@safd.org](mailto:ECRegRep@safd.org)

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This region did not submit a report for this issue

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## Great Lakes Region:

Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin



By: Jim Stark  
e: [GLRegRep@safd.org](mailto:GLRegRep@safd.org)

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**CT Bruce Cromer** played Arnolphe in *The School for Wives* at the Shakespeare Theatre of New Jersey, during June and July, to critical acclaim. He has been nominated in two categories for the

annual Cincinnati Entertainment Awards: Best Lead Actor in a Play (Salieri in the Cincinnati Shakespeare Company's *Amadeus*) and Best Lead Actor in a Musical (Frederik in the New Stage Collective's *A Little Night Music*).

**FD Paul Denhardt** directed the fights and movement for *The Merry Wives of Windsor* at the Shakespeare Festival St. Louis assisted by Cara Rawlings and Dance Choreographer Jean Kerr. He spent the remainder of the month of June at home taking care of his beautiful daughters. In July he was Head TA at the National Stage Combat Workshop assisting Angela Bonacasa and Jessica Dunne in workshop coordination. He had the great pleasure of working once again with FM K Jenny Jones as her TA for the Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop. He also conducted and SPT class in Rapier & Dagger at Illinois Wesleyan University, adjudicated by FM and Founder David Boushey.

**AAC Christopher Elst** attended the Central Illinois Stage Combat Workshop (lovingly known as CISCo), capturing his last outstanding recommended pass in Sword and Shield and a recommended renewal in Smallsword under the tutelage of CTs D.C. Wright and H. Russ Brown. Alongside this workshop, he performed as Lord Grey, The French Dolphin and the French Queen in the Unrehearsed Shakespeare Workshop. In late August, he was horribly murdered as an ensemble member in an acclaimed staging of *Sweeney Todd* at Off-the-Wall Theatre in Milwaukee. Future roles include MacDuff (fight choreographer/ captain), also with Off-the-Wall, and several roles in a one-act series, *Fresh Brewed* and *The New Century*, both with RSVP Theatre in Milwaukee.

**AAC Maria Henriksen-DeHoff** attended the NSCW Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop in July, where she renewed in Broadsword, Unarmed, and Single Sword, and spent three weeks expanding both her acting and fighting skills. Big hugs to all of her fellow students and teachers: you are missed!

**AAC Adam Noble** recently returned from serving as an intern at the NSCW in Winston-Salem. While there, he had an opportunity to work with and learn from some of the best in brightest in our society. Sure it was tiring . . . but it was worth it. This fall, Adam will begin his third year as MFA Movement Professor for Indiana University (IU), where he has been devoting himself to streamlining and outfitting the university armory. (Thank you, Lewis Shaw, for the beautiful new gladii!) Upcoming projects at IU: *Blood Brothers*, *Parentheses of Blood*, *Marat/Sade*, and *Take Me Out*. For the Jacobs School of Music: *Romeo et Juliette* and *West Side Story*. Regional Projects: *Seven Brides for Seven Brothers*, *Romeo & Juliet*, and an as-of-yet untitled indie action film.

**Friend Rich Rand** directed Ka-tet Theatre's production of *Road* at Stage Left in Chicago in August 2009.

**CT/FD Nick Sandys** just directed and choreographed *Macbeth* for First Folio Theatre in Oak Brook, Ill.; choreographed *Boleros For The Disenchanted* at The Goodman, choreographed *Honest* by Eric Simonson in Steppenwolf's First Look series and choreographed *Don Giovanni* for The Ryan Center at Lyric Opera of Chicago. He played Deeley in *Old Times* for Remy Bumpo Theatre, and is about to play Henry Higgins in *My Fair Lady* for Light Opera Works in Evanston, Ill. At the end of May, he also had a second set of SPTs at The Theatre

School at DePaul University, and the whole class passed in four weapons (R&D, UA, SS, and BS).

**AC Steven Schwall** spent the summer as the theatre Technical Director for Camp Laurel in Maine. He will soon begin his final year of graduate school, at Eastern Michigan University.

In June, **CT Jim Stark** conducted a video SPT in Quarterstaff (Congrats to AAC Mike Speck) taught a movement class for the Fine Arts Camp at Emmanuel College, Ga., and continued south to appear in *Gutenberg: the Musical* and *A Midsummer Night's Delight* for the South Carolina Repertory Company in July and August.

**CT DC Wright** continued his busy streak this summer. After teaming up with fellow CT Russ Brown teaching Smallsword and Sword and Shield at the highly successful Central Illinois Stage Combat Workshop (which DC also co-coordinates with Holly Rocke) he was off to Navy Pier in Chicago, to join fellow CT Tiza Garland as pirates on the Tall Ship Windy. He got to live on the ship at the Pier, go sailing dressed as a pirate, and tell true piratical tales from the waters of the Great Lakes. Tiza and DC were also known to be swashing that buckle a bit on the pier while waiting for the next cruise. They also took a Segway tour. It was awesome. Then it was back to Macomb and WIU to direct the Summer Music Theatre production of *Little Shop of Horrors*, starring ACs Lily Blouin as Audrey and Nathan Grant as the Dentist. Then AAC Fulton Burns came back to town for a week of renewals in all 8 weapons over 5 days, helped out by partners Lily Blouin, and AC Glen Wall. DC was an instructor for the DAI Teachers Symposium the first two weeks of August, held this year in his hometown Macomb and then dashed off to Anchorage, Alaska for a week long introductory stage combat workshop before rushing back to WIU to begin the new school year and direct the first show of the main stage season.

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## International:



By: Bret Yount  
e: [IntlRegRep@safd.org](mailto:IntlRegRep@safd.org)

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This region did not submit a report for this issue

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## Mid-America Region:

Iowa Kansas, Minnesota,  
Missouri, Nebraska, North  
Dakota, South Dakota



By: Mike Speck  
e: [MARegRep@safd.org](mailto:MARegRep@safd.org)

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**CT Ian Borden** recently choreographed *Oklahoma!* for the University of Nebraska: Kearney and stunt coordinated *Vipers in the Grass*, a movie shot as a collaboration between the Johnny Carson School of Theatre and Film and Hollywood Professionals. The film was written by Jorge Zamacona and starred Dean Winters and Harley Jane Kozak. This summer he played Phil in *Vino Veritas* for Nebraska Rep. and also served as Fight Director for the company. In August, he also directed fights and played Saul in *True West* with Angels Theatre Company. He will be

presenting at the Blackfriars Conference in October and at the American Society for Theatre Research Conference in November. In addition, he will be back at Carnage in the Corn this November and will be teaching a Master Class at Grand Valley State in December.

**AC Justin Gamerl** traveled to Seattle, Wash. to participate in the USA Stunt School.

**AC Karla Kash** spent the summer directing/choreographing *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dream Coat* for Tent Theatre, fight directing and choreographing *Twelfth Night* for Repertory Theatre of Iowa and directing/choreographing *Forbidden Broadway* for StageWest Theatre Company. She will also direct and choreograph *Cabaret* at Drake University, and coordinate Carnage in The Corn II.

**AC David Schneider** recently choreographed an Elizabethan translation of *Pulp Fiction* for the 2009 Minn. Fringe Festival: *Bard Fiction*, which included sixteen various stabs and cuts, six spear misses, and one boar's thrust through the sphincter (total kills: seven).

**AC and Regional Rep Mike Speck** spent the summer with the Lincoln Amphitheatre in Indiana, playing John Wilkes Booth et al. in their new production, *Lincoln*, and arranging a First Folio Cue Script production of *2 Henry IV*, for which he also choreographed fights and played Warwick. While in Indiana, he successfully tested in Quarterstaff with CT (and fellow Reg. Rep.) Jim Stark. In the fall he begins studies in Project Management and Arts & Cultural Management at St. Mary's University of Minnesota. He will also coordinate the sequel to last year's highly-successful Carnage in the Corn.



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## New England Region:

Connecticut, Maine,  
Massachusetts, New  
Hampshire, Rhode Island,  
Vermont



By: Rob Najarian  
e: [NERegRep@safd.org](mailto:NERegRep@safd.org)

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**Friend Mark Bedell** held a Staged Combat Intensive Teacher Training course (SCITT) where he taught regular (as yet untrained) High School and University Theatre Teachers/Professors how to teach very basic stage combat; allowing them to be able to safely give their students a small taste of stage combat before bringing in a real Fight Director/Teacher. This training was sponsored by the Independent Fight Director's Guild ([www.theifdg.com](http://www.theifdg.com)). The Maine Academy of Stage Combat ([www.fight-director.org](http://www.fight-director.org)), along with several other fight schools all over the country, entered an episode into The Hunted YouTube Contest ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXtjgAUX1Kg](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BXtjgAUX1Kg)). The winner should be announced soon. Check out the contest ([www.youtube.com/groups\\_videos?name=thehuntedtv](http://www.youtube.com/groups_videos?name=thehuntedtv)) and let them know what you think (especially of Mark's episode: *Generations*). Mark is also offering an Action Film-Making class ([www.maineacademyofstagedcombat.org/classes.html](http://www.maineacademyofstagedcombat.org/classes.html)) later this summer, along with directing seven shows.

**AC Meron Langsner** fight directed *Romeo & Juliet* and *It's a Bird, It's a Plane, It's Superman!* for Lyric First

Stage in Boston, Mass. This summer he taught Intro to Acting at Tufts University, where he continues to work on his PhD. His series of parodies entitled *The Godot Variations* were performed in Boston, and his full-length play based on the Faust myth, *The Devil's Own Game*, has recently received several staged readings.

**AC Matthew Martino** has just finished directing his first feature film: *The Drachen Recruitment Experiment* and is happy to announce it will screen this October. He recently taught the workshop Acting and Performance for Martial Artists, and helped prepare a group of actors for the Providence 48 Hour Film Festival. He performed his sword fighting show, *The Dogs of War* at The Midsummer Magick Faire in Oxford, Conn.

### CT/Regional Representative

**Robert Najarian** had a "well-looked forward to vacation" this summer. He did some traveling through Europe that included stops in London, Dublin, Paris, and Berlin. While in London, he was a guest of Lewis Penfold of the British Academy of Dramatic Combat and viewed the final combat scenes for Mr. Penfold's acting students at Arts Educational. Upon his return to the US, Rob did the fight direction for a production of *King Lear* at the Gallery Players in New York, and spent the rest of his time in July working as an extra on various films shooting in Massachusetts (such as *The Fighter* with Mark Wahlberg and Christian Bale, and *Furry Vengeance* with Brendan Fraser). For those interested, and in the Boston area, C.P. Casting is seeking stunt performers for the film *The Town*. Shooting will take place between August 24 and November 17 in Boston. Email photo, stunt resume and a contact phone number to [matt@cpcasting.com](mailto:matt@cpcasting.com). Submissions may also be mailed to C.P. Casting, 537 Tremont Street, Boston, MA 02116.

**CT Robert Walsh** did the fight direction for *The Miracle At Naples* (world premiere) with Huntington Theatre Company with David Grimm (author) Peter DuBois (director),

*Don Giovanni* with Boston Lyric Opera (Tazewell Thompson director), and David Mamet's *Romance* with American Repertory Theatre - Scott Zigler (director). Robert also garnered roles in *Madso's War*, a pilot for Spike TV which will be airing soon (appearing as featured Special Agent Andrews), the premiere of *Walking the Volcano* at the Vineyard Playhouse with Jon Lipsky (author) and M.J. Bruder Munafo (director), and *Sins of the Mother* by Israel Horovitz (also directing) at Gloucester Stage Company.

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## Northwest Region:

Washington, Alaska, Oregon



By: Heidi Wolf  
e: [NWRegRep@safd.org](mailto:NWRegRep@safd.org)

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**FM Geof Alm** was fight director for *Below the Belt* at ACT in Spring, the *Ring Cycle* and *Das Barbecü* at Seattle Opera in Summer, and will be fight directing and acting in *Peter Pan* at Seattle Children's Theatre in the fall/winter. He has his usual teaching commitments for the 2009-2010 school year: the University of Washington, the University of Puget Sound, Cornish College of the Arts, and Freehold.

**Friend Deb Fialkow** closed Hatcher's *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* at ACT Theatre in April (fight direction by FM Alm) and will be seen in their upcoming production of Stoppard's *Rock 'n' Roll*. She fight directed Seattle Shakespeare Company/ Wooden O Productions' *Richard III* and *The Taming of the Shrew*; and will be teaching overview stage combat classes in August for 5th Avenue's musical theater summer

camp. She also is a STOTT Pilates instructor, currently teaching at a private studio in Issaquah.

**AC Kevin Inouye** is finally recognized in Single Sword (his last of the SAFD eight). By the time of this printing, his entry for The Hunted Online Video Contest will be live and judged; look for it on YouTube under the episode title "Fuzz Meets Fangs" or in The Hunted YouTube group. Written, directed, shot, equipped, and coordinated by Kevin, it features the talents of many local SAFD actors as well as FM Geof Alm as Captain Almsmeister. Kevin is delighted that his article "Dynamic Gunplay" can now be found in the most recent edition of *The Fight Master*.

**FD Bob Macdougall** reports that between April 2009 and August 2009, he choreographed fights/action and taught movement, stage combat (including at the 2009 NSCW in the ISC, ACW, and AACW, where he was a TA for FM Richard Raether), self defense, and taijiquan on three continents. Recent fight choreography includes *As You Like It*, *American Pilot*, *Three Musketeers*, *Bettelstudent*, and *Mating Dance of the Werewolf*. Choreography upcoming this fall includes *As You Like It*, *A Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Anon(nymous)*. This will also be the start of his 25th year teaching movement, and 23rd year teaching stage combat, at Cornish College of the Arts in Seattle.

This year, former **Friend Amber Rack** assisted FM Geof Alm's stage combat classes through Freehold Theatre, and watched all of the students pass their SPTs. She also worked on a couple of short film projects, including a role as a katana-wielding vampire. Fun stuff!

**AC Julia H Welch** graduated from the University of Puget Sound this last May with a B.A. in Theatre Arts. She is currently working as a teaching assistant/intern at the Seattle Children's Theatre and will be the Fight Captain on their Summer Season production of *Romeo and Juliet*.

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## Pacific West Region:

California, Nevada, Arizona,  
Hawaii



By: Robert Hamilton  
e: [PWRegRep@safd.org](mailto:PWRegRep@safd.org)

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**Honorary Member Anthony De Longis** has been keeping busy auditioning, teaching, training to stay performance sharp and overseeing the construction on his school at Rancho Indalo. He recently finished a lead role in the new Rockstar Games project *Red Dead Redemption*, and wrapped filming on his latest instructional DVD, *L'Ecole Francaise*, a practical and combative study of the french school of Smallsword by the very talented Maestro Jeanette Acosta Martinez with Maestro Ramon Martinez. In addition, he appeared in Spike TV's William Wallace vs Shaka Zulu episode of *Deadliest Warrior* as a weapons expert and test cutter with the five foot claymore. His wife, Dr. Mary, edited the highlights from his appearance on History Channel's *More Extreme Marksmen*, and also found a link to the entire episode, displaying challenges with candles, flowers, wine goblets and galloping horses. (Full Episode 10:01 [www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYwKFTOB0bc](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OYwKFTOB0bc) and 3:12 edited version [www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9LfTw6K2XU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=y9LfTw6K2XU)). He co-starred on a new series called *Leverage* in "The Wedding Job" playing "the butcher of Kiev" that's currently in re-runs, and shot live ammo from a galloping horse for History Channel's *Lock and Load*, a feat made more difficult by the

placement of five cameras around the target (creating only a three foot window to make the shot). His upcoming *Lock & Load* episode compares curved sabers with the straight bladed 1913 Patton saber on horseback. He just taught *How I Met Your Mother* series star Jason Segal and actress Kim Matula to "thread the needle" cracking whips while dodging lights, equipment and a UCLA classroom full of students and continues work on the web series *The Hunted*, which is still seeking distribution.

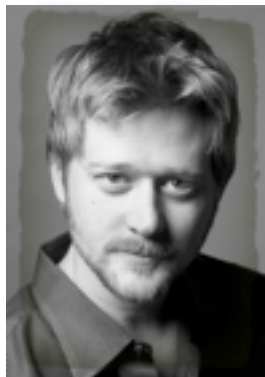
Since January, **AC DURAND GARCIA**, whose Fight Action Associates enters its third year, has choreographed San Francisco State University's *Streetcar Named Desire*, and *Chairs* (a suicide leap); assisted Fight Choreographer Andrea Weber and was Fight Captain for *An Affair of Honor* for Exit Theatre's Diva Fest, choreographed Piedmont High School's *St. Joan* (a twenty person battle sequence plus a Broadsword fight); choreographed movement and battle sequences in Purcell's *Dioclesian* for San Francisco Cabaret Opera, and choreographed fights for Washington High School's *Romeo and Juliet*. Mr. Garcia also choreographed violence for three short films: Frog Band Productions' *The Experiment* (and did some second unit directing), Biting Snake Productions *Blood Tie*; and Isaac Ebersole's *The Forgotten War* (Stunt and armoring coordination). He was Gregory Hoffman's teaching assistant for Stage Combat this spring at the American Conservatory Theatre's Acting Conservatory, and just completed his fourth semester toward his Master's degree in Drama at San Francisco State University. He is a member of the Academy of Art University's faculty where he teaches Contemporary and Historic Theatrical Violence.

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## Rocky Mountain

### Region:

Idaho, Montana, Colorado,  
Utah, Wyoming



By: Benaiah Anderson  
e: [RMRegRep@safd.org](mailto:RMRegRep@safd.org)

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This region did not submit a report for this issue

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## South East Region:

Alabama, Florida, Georgia,  
Kentucky, Mississippi, North  
Carolina, South Carolina,  
Tennessee, Virginia, West  
Virginia



By: John Cashman  
e: [SERegRep@safd.org](mailto:SERegRep@safd.org)

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**AAC Fulton Burns** received the Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival's Certificate of Merit for Directing based upon his work with the recent production of *Anything Goes* at University of South Alabama. He has also taught stage combat workshops in Gulf

Port, Miss. and *Unarmed, Single Rapier, Knife, & Food Fighting* for the Lynn Meadows Discovery Center. In addition, Burns served as the Fight Director for Mobile Carnival Theatre Company's production of *Romeo & Juliet* and then this summer returned to the McLeod Summer Playhouse in Carbondale, Ill. where he directed *Picasso at the Lapin Agile*.

**CT Tiza Garland** completed her fifth academic year as Assistant Professor of Theatre at the University of Florida. As a member of the Executive Committee of SETC (Southeastern Theatre Conference) she attended the annual Spring Board Meeting in May where that organization started action on strategic planning for the future of SETC. Soon after the SETC meeting Tiza joined director Bill Kinkaid, CT H. Russ Brown, and CT D.C. Wright in Eureka, Ill., where Tiza played the title role in *Henry V* using the Unrehearsed Shakespeare approach. Tiza then spent several weeks living on a Tall Ship on Lake Michigan where she presented educational tours on the history of piracy on the Great Lakes. In June she joined FM k. Jenny Jones in a flying and fighting workshop at ZFX in Kentucky. Tiza spent July at the NSCW assisting FM Richard Raether in Broadsword and she also taught master classes to the ACW, which addressed specific concepts and techniques in order to prepare them for their skills proficiency tests. While at the NSCW she taught Single Sword, assisted in Knife, and taught the first few classes of Broadsword to the Intro to Stage Combat (ISC) students. Tiza is spending her "free time" writing a paper for the Laban Institute of Movement Studies, another paper comparing the glossaries of the BASSC and the SAFD, and preparing for the fall semester, which includes a full teaching load, movement coach and fight direction responsibilities, and being the faculty adviser for the Aerial Dance Club, the Contact Improv Club, and the Stage Combat Club as well as actively participating with the student theatre group The Florida Players and the Hip-Hop

theatre group Signs of Life at the University of Florida.

**AC Jay Peterson** had just enough time to knock the Afghanistan sand off his boots before heading down to the AACW this year. After three weeks of sword-swinging and brain-draining fun, Jay is now back in his native Atlanta, adjusting to civilian life. He's also hard at work on *The Barbarian Siblings* with his sister Merry.

**CT/FD Scot J. Mann** had a busy spring and summer choreographing *Romeo and Juliet* (his 29<sup>th</sup>) for Gainesville College and University, *The Rover* for Georgia College and University, *Deathtrap* for Georgia Tech., and *Titus Andronicus* for the Georgia Shakespeare Festival. In April, Scot instructed the Theatrical Firearms Safety Course for the Rumble in the Rockies with SAFD President Geoff Kent and AC Kelly Martin Assisting. He taught the first SAFD Firearms Instructor Course there as well. Scot also taught at the Louisiana Stage Combat Workshop with AC Kelly Martin. Somewhere in between, Scot directed *Fiddler on the Roof* at the Grand Opera House in Macon, Ga. and *Graduation Story* at Mercer University where he teaches full-time.

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## South West Region:

New Mexico, Texas, Oklahoma,  
Arkansas, Louisiana



By: Ann Candler Harlan  
e: [SWRegRep@safd.org](mailto:SWRegRep@safd.org)

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**FM Brian Byrnes'** recent and upcoming work includes serving as Associate Director for *Henry V* with American Players Theatre (Spring

Green, Wis.), coordinating the curriculum for The Texas Intensive Stage Combat Workshop, Houston, Texas, (Sept. 4-6); serving as Fight Director for Houston Grand Opera productions during their 2009-2010 season. He also worked as Fight Coach for *Romeo and Juliet* with Texas Ballet Theatre (Fort Worth, Texas); as Director for *La Boheme* with Opera in the Heights (Houston, Texas) and as Director for *The Complete History of America, Abridged* with Stages Repertory Theatre (Houston, Texas).

**AC Ann Candler Harlan** has spent the summer singing as a soloist or filling out the chorus for various churches, including a concert of Mendelssohn's *Elijah at Temple Sinai* in New Orleans with the Bach Society Chorus. She will be participating in a demonstration of Tai Chi at the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston on September 11; serving as Fight Director for an upcoming production of *Romeo and Juliet* at Bush High School in Fort Bend, Texas; and of course, planning and coordinating details for the

upcoming Texas Intensive Stage Combat Workshop!

**CT/FD Jack Young** has spent the last few months doing Fight Direction for Houston Shakespeare Festival's *Twelfth Night* and *Pericles* (July/August); acting in Main Street Theatre's *Awake And Sing!* (May/June); Directing *All Over for New York City Fringe* (July/August) and will be teaching at Texas Intensive this September.

## Upcoming SPT's/SPR's

When: September 7, 2009  
Where: The Texas Intensive Stage Combat Workshop, Houston, TX  
What: SPR - TBD  
CT: TBD  
Adjudicator: TBD  
Contact: Brian Byrnes, (713) 446-4004 [bbyrnes123@yahoo.com](mailto:bbyrnes123@yahoo.com)

When: December 18, 2009  
Where: City College of New York  
What: SPT - UA  
CT: Denise Hurd  
Adjudicator: TBD  
Contact: Denise Hurd, [dahurd2000@aol.com](mailto:dahurd2000@aol.com)

When: December 8, 2009  
Where: University of Michigan  
What: SPT - QS, R&D, and UA  
CT: Erik Fredricksen  
Adjudicator: Chuck Coyl  
Contact: Erik Fredricksen, [hannis@umich.edu](mailto:hannis@umich.edu)

When: December 18, 2009  
Where: SUNY Fredonia  
What: SPT - UA  
CT: Ted Sharon  
Adjudicator: TBD  
Contact: Ted Sharon, (716) 410-3597

### The Texas Intensive Stage Combat Workshop & The Fight Directors Forum Labor Day Weekend 2009

A Society of American Fight Directors Sanctioned Event

#### The Texas Intensive Stage Combat Workshop

9am-6:30pm, Saturday and Sunday, September 5<sup>th</sup> & 6<sup>th</sup>, 2009 (Labor Day Weekend)

Applying performance principles of stage combat in a variety of classes for beginner to advanced level actor/fighters. \*Skills Proficiency Renewals (SPR) offered on Monday, Sept. 7<sup>th</sup>. Additional fees apply.\*

#### The Fight Directors Forum

7:00-9:00pm Friday, September 4<sup>th</sup>, 2009

Start the weekend off with "a special seminar in fundamental principles of stage fighting from a fight director's point of view". This event is open to the public and free of charge.



The Texas Intensive  
Society of American Fight Directors Regional Workshop  
School of Theatre & Dance  
UNIVERSITY of HOUSTON

**Workshop Fee: \$175.00** T-shirt and food included!

Pre-registration is highly recommended. 10% discount for - S.A.F.D. members -or- groups of six or more! One discount per participant.

Send a copy of current S.A.F.D. membership card -or- send your group's registration forms together to qualify for a discount.

Send fees with contact information to: Frowbiz, 5041 Nina Lee Lane, Houston, TX 77092 or Fax with a credit card# 713-683-0467

\* For Registration form or inquiries write to Ann C. Harlan, Sponsor, via [SWRegRep@safd.org](mailto:SWRegRep@safd.org) or call 713-419-9321 \*

# Philadelphia Stage Combat Workshop!

*www.philascw.org*

**Date:** October 3-4, 2009

**Location:** Philadelphia, PA

**Cost:** \$250 or \$175 if SAFD by 9/1/09

**Register:** (215) 802-3885

\*Your tuition includes continental breakfast, cheese steak lunch and a weekend of classes.

**Instructors:**

SAFD CT/FD John Bellomo

SAFD CT/FD Charles Conwell

SAFD CT/FD Ian Rose

FD J. Alex Cordaro



**Discounts:**

10% SAFD at the door

\$225 SAFD & Student ID at the door

\$275 at the door



**Past Classes:**

Cavalry Sabre

Melee vs. Duel

Skirts, Heels, & Swords

Unarmed vs. Knife

Motion Capture

Fascinatin' Rhythm

Rifle & Bayonet

Athletic Smallsword

Twirling Sticks of Doom

Classes in all 8 SAFD

Disciplines

*Hosted by the University of the Arts*  
See pictures from last year on our Myspace account:  
<http://www.myspace.com/phillyfightworkshop>

Drake University Department of Theatre Presents

## CARNAGE IN THE CORN II

A Society of American Fight Directors Sanctioned  
Stage Combat Workshop

NOVEMBER 21 & 22, 2009  
DRAKE UNIVERSITY DES MOINES, IA



PROPOSED CLASSES INCLUDE: Instant Choreography; 3-2-1 Contact!; Tyler Durden isn't Home; Stage Combat Jazz; Street-Fightin' Single Sword; Who Says Broadwords are Slow; and basic classes in SAFD combat disciplines.

CONFIRMED TEACHERS: Fight Master Mike Chin, Fight Director Michael "MJ" Johnson, Certified Teachers Ian Borden, Brian LeTraunik and DC Wright.

**FULL CONFERENCE REGISTRATION**

General Registration: \$150

Drake/SAFD/Early Registration: \$125

**SINGLE DAY REGISTRATION**

General Registration: \$80

Drake/SAFD/Early Reg: \$70

**Space is limited. Register today!**

To receive the early registration discount, you must be paid in full by **October 20.**

FOR MORE INFORMATION and to register, e-mail [carnageinthecorn@yahoo.com](mailto:carnageinthecorn@yahoo.com)

# FIGHTING SOLVES EVERYTHING!

*The Fifteenth Annual*

# WINTER WONDERLAND WORKSHOP

January 15-17, 2010



[www.winterwonderlandworkshop.com](http://www.winterwonderlandworkshop.com)

## SAFD

THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS



MERCHANDISE AVAILABLE ON-LINE!



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Hoodies  
Swordbags  
Sweatpants  
Ladies-wear  
& more!



[www.companycasuals.com/SAFD](http://www.companycasuals.com/SAFD)

**Historical Photo #1:**

Robyn Weiss, Jeff A.R. Jones, Tiza Garland, Lewis Shaw, Dexter Fidler, Payson Burt, k. Jenny Jones, Drew Fracher, Mark Guinn, Michael Chin, David Woolley, Mike Mahaffey



Las Vegas, NV

1996

## Call For Historical Information!

The Cutting Edge is seeking additional historical information on the Society of American Fight Directors (SAFD). We are looking to update the website and establish a more concrete system of record keeping to preserve the legacy that was started by our founders (SAFD). We are looking for the following:

1. Photos from past SAFD events with captions
  - a. Please send photos as .jpg, .tif, or .eps files
  - b. We accept black & white as well as color photos - but color is preferred
  - c. 300 dpi is preferred, but contact us if you are having problems
  - d. Please include name of photographer, subjects' names and membership levels.
2. Lists of attendees for any and all SAFD sanctioned events
3. Detailed examples of how the SAFD has assisted you as an artist, an educator, and/or choreographer

Please send submissions and any questions to our email, [cuttingedge@safd.org](mailto:cuttingedge@safd.org). This is a tremendous opportunity to share your favorite memories and inspire new generations of members. We hope that you will find the time to take advantage of this opportunity.

*Society of American  
Fight Directors*



*Lust, Violence, Blood:  
Where Stage Combat  
Meets Fine Art*



*Thank you to Elizabeth Styles  
for her fantastic NSCW designs!*

# 2009 SAFD Membership Application/Annual Dues Form

Please complete the entire form. In order for the SAFD to maintain accurate records, it is important that all of your information in our database be current. You can mail your payment with this form, or you may pay online with a credit card at [www.safd.org](http://www.safd.org).

Reasons to join the SAFD:

- Subscription to **The Fight Master**, a journal published twice yearly
- Subscription to **The Cutting Edge**, our bimonthly online newsletter
- Access to back issues of both publications and online discussions in the members only section at [www.safd.org](http://www.safd.org)
- Discounts to national and regional stage combat workshops
- The right to vote for members of the Executive Committee and Governing Body
- A free T-Shirt (Available to new and renewing members)
- And much, much more...

**Status (Check one):**  New Member  Current Renewing Member  Lapsed Renewing Member  Gift\*

\*If giving a membership as a gift, please print your name here \_\_\_\_\_

Please fill in the information for the gift receiver below.

**Amount Enclosed (\$45.00/year USA, \$55.00/year Outside USA) \$** \_\_\_\_\_ **.00**

**Payment Method (please check one):**  Paid online via Credit Card (please include copy of online receipt)  Paid via enclosed Check Check # \_\_\_\_\_

## General Information

**Membership Level (please check one):**

Organization  Friend  Actor/Combatant  Advanced Actor/Combatant  Certified Teacher  Fight Director

**Name (First, MI, Last):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Work Address:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials should be mailed to (please check one):**

Home  Work

**Home Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Cell Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Work Phone:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Email:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Website:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Union Affiliations (SAG, AEA, etc.):** \_\_\_\_\_

**T-Shirt Size (please check one):**

S  M  L  XL  XXL

**Please check the following:**

- I would like to receive information regarding SAFD sanctioned workshops:  YES  NO
- I would like to receive information regarding non-sanctioned workshops:  YES  NO
- I would like to receive information regarding SAFD classes in my area:  YES  NO
- I would like to receive information regarding SAFD merchandise:  YES  NO

## Current Skills Proficiency Test Results (Please list most recent SPT for each weapon)

WEAPON	Month/Year	Instructor	Adjudicator
Broadsword			
Knife			
Quarterstaff			
Rapier & Dagger			
Single Sword			
Smallsword			
Sword & Shield			
Unarmed			

**Photocopy & Mail with payment or receipt to: SAFD, 1350 East Flamingo Road #25, Las Vegas, NV. 89119**



## Word of the Issue:

### RAP

**SAFD Definition:** a.) A severe blow or stroke with a sword, dagger or other such weapon. [*Lear* - n.iv.125]  
b.) A painful stroke or blow with a branch, stick or other such rod, not causing serious harm.

**Dictionary Definition:** a.) To strike, esp. with a quick, smart or light blow  
b.) To utter sharply or vigorously



## WHY SHOULD YOU JOIN THE SAFD?

### **Save**

If you join on the day of your spt (skills proficiency test), you join at a 33% discount. Pay only \$30 instead of \$45 for your first year of membership.

### **Network**

Become a member of a close-knit organization within a close-knit industry. We think we're a pretty friendly bunch and we're always happy to meet more new members.

### **Discounts**

Attend future SAFD workshops at a discounted rate. National and regional workshops offer big savings once you're an SAFD member.

### **Access**

Get listed on the new and improved SAFD website that gives you access to member info across the nation. If you move or are working out of town, you'll be able to contact local SAFD members more easily.

### **Opportunities**

The new and improved SAFD website will also allow directors, fight directors, casting directors and other employers an easy way to find you and other qualified fighters in your neck of the woods.