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The FightMaster

Spring 2018 The Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

Raising Expectations

Bloody Consequences

**A Fight Director's
Tool Kit**

Violence Literacy

**Theater for
Youth Techniques
for the Stage
Combat Classroom**

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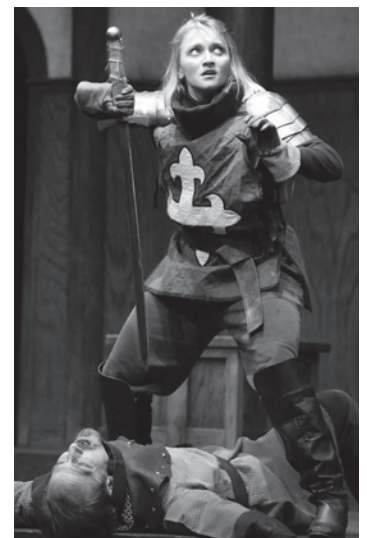
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Editorially Speaking



At every workshop I have ever attended, there has always been a cringe/laugh ratio about dying. A particularly brutal run through with a sword is followed by chuckles and cheers, quickly repeated and reinterpreted by the participants. Who can top the kill of the last fighters? Deaths get more and more elaborate and we, the trained audience, cheer at the choreographed brutality. We celebrate a good death in a fight. Comedic fights have their own moments of “pain-is-humor”—a fop getting his comeuppance is not met with pity but laughter. And I have been taught by my teachers that it is far more “fun” to die than to kill and that dying on stage has its own special set of rewards.

Why do we laugh in the face of danger, and why do we chuckle at death? I think we laugh because our minds don’t really want to comprehend the truth behind the violence we commit when we are acting—we don’t want to think about the reality behind our actions. We save that for character building and the play itself. In practicing dying, we inure ourselves to it. We give ourselves space to approach it first carefully, then comically, then neutrally, distancing our actor-selves from this severe action. This is so we can find room to let our characters be afraid of death because fear is the animalistic response. Pop culture teaches us that those characters who have no fear of death are those who the “sane” ones need to fear the most, because it is not considered “natural” to face death without fear. As stage combatants, we have to have no fear of death because we might be dying two times a night on stage for four weeks.

I received several articles on the act of dying, two of which are published in this issue. They are meant to serve as a tool, a means of distancing the actor from the act, so that the character response can come out. Practicing our art puts us face to face with mortality on a regular basis, but it’s important to recognize that death is not just dropping to the ground so the play can go on. We each only get one real death—we need to give that same privilege to the characters we play.

As a quick turnaround, spring is here with its promise of renewal and rebirth. Workshops are underway, and the National Workshop is coming up in a couple of months. I wish you all the best of luck with your final exams, your certifications, and your fighting. I hope that 2018 gives you what you need to be the best performers you can be, and that the information in the following articles guides you to new insights and questions to ask.

Be well, fight well!

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The FightMaster

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

Articles

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

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- Authors are assumed to be working toward the betterment of the SAFD and, thus, will not be paid for submissions

Please forward submissions and questions to:

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Graphics

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

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Geoffrey Kent is a director, actor, teacher and fight director based out of Denver Colorado. He is the resident fight director for the Denver Center for the Performing arts for the last two decades and has staged violence for the Colorado Shakespeare Festival for fourteen years. Other recent work includes *Treasure Island* and *Shakespeare in Love* for the Utah Shakespeare Festival, *Cymbeline* & *Titus Andronicus* for the Orlando Shakespeare Theatre, *Romeo & Juliet* for the Aspen Sante- Fe Ballet and *Carmen* for Opera Colorado. Geoffreykent.com



Jamie Macpherson is a fight director/instructor, specializing in working with young people. She is an Actor Combatant and a member of SAFD. As a researcher, Jamie is interested in investigating teaching methods for stage combat, as well as the art form's capacity to develop empathy. Jamie holds an MFA in Theatre for Youth from Arizona State University. You can check out more about her work at jamiemacpherson.com.



Joseph Travers (SAFD Fight Director/Certified Teacher) has been fight directing and teaching stage combat for over twenty-five years. Recent fight directing work includes the New York premier of *Counting Sheep*, the Off-Broadway premier of *The View Upstairs* and the Broadway production of *Bronx Bombers*. He teaches stage combat for the *Columbia University* MFA Acting Program, heads the stage combat program at *AMDA, NYC*, and is the Managing Director of *Swordplay*, NYC's longest running stage combat school.



Sarah Walsh is an SAFD certified actor combatant, on-set medic, and martial artist. From a very young age she developed a love for the defense arts, medical arts and theatrical arts, and considers herself very lucky to be pursuing a life based around all three of her passions. She's currently studying her fifth martial discipline and studying stage combat with Neutral Chaos.



David Woolley is a veteran of Chicago Theatre. He has staged fights for over 400 productions since 1982. He is: a Fight Master with the Society of American Fight Directors, Professor of Instruction and Combat Coordinator at Columbia College Chicago, and Guido Crescendo in *Dirk and Guido the Swordsmen!* (now in his 28th season). At Columbia College Chicago, he coordinates the violent needs of a burgeoning department and teaches 3 classes of combative arts. He has also been nominated for and received multiple Jeff awards.

On The Cover



Pictured (left to right): Robert Fortner, Colin Wilson, Six Carolino, Courtland Le'Neill, Veer Poonia in the Production of the "Ruler of the Ball" music video by Crown Vox. *Photograph by Philip Murphy.*

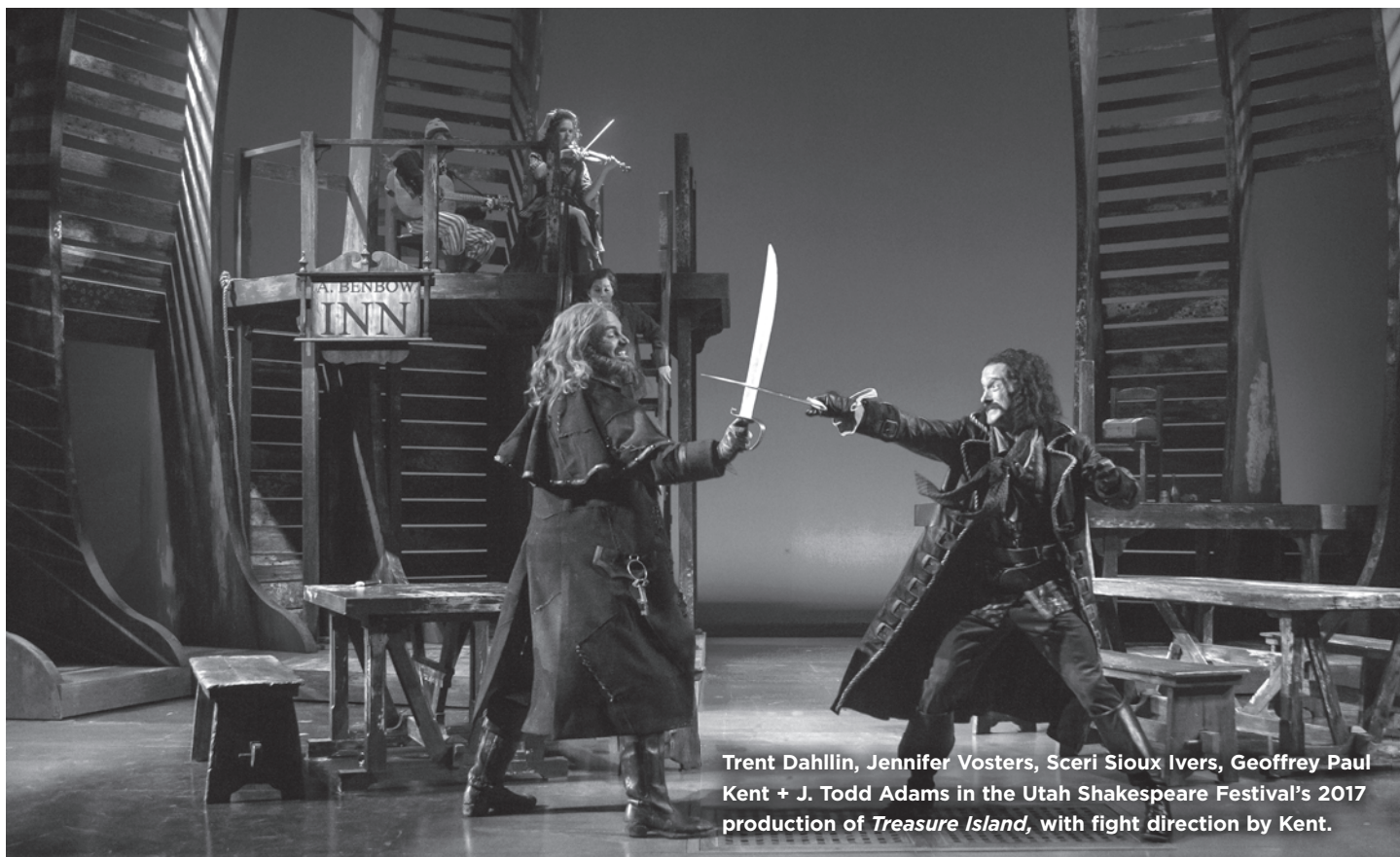
Raising Expectations

FACILITATED + EDITED BY KRISTY CUMMINGS

Editor's Note: This article is a reprint. The original appeared in SDC Journal, Fall 2017. Used with permission from SDC.

This past spring, the SDC/LORT negotiations resulted in LORT's recognition of fight choreographers who are SDC Members—a historic moment, as it is the first expansion of the SDC bargaining unit since the Union's founding in 1959. As this new coverage takes effect, SDC Member and fight choreographer **Geoffrey Paul Kent** sat down with fellow SDC Members and fight choreographers **Drew Fracher**, **Steve Rankin**, **Tom Schall**, and **Robert Westley** to discuss the craft of staging violence, including their creative processes, biggest challenges, and what Union recognition means to them.





Trent Dahllin, Jennifer Vosters, Sceri Sioux Ivers, Geoffrey Paul Kent + J. Todd Adams in the Utah Shakespeare Festival's 2017 production of *Treasure Island*, with fight direction by Kent.

A Roundtable Discussion Moderated by Fight Choreographer, Director + Actor **GEOFFREY PAUL KENT**

GEOFFREY | What got you started in this profession? When did you realize that you were a fight director/choreographer?

ROBERT | I started off as an actor and, like most actors, eventually you're in a production that has some sort of violence. For me, it was playing Malcolm in *Macbeth*, which had a lot of sword fights. The fight director mentioned that I took to it pretty well and that I should consider exploring it further. I did. Having grown up watching *Zorro* and all of the Errol Flynn movies, it was a joy to pick up. It fell into my lap at the right time in my life, and I slowly transitioned into it.

STEVE | You know, that is the single most difficult question that I have to answer! I've tried to condense it over the years but it always ends up being a long conversation because people don't really have any idea that this is a profession. I've even had to explain it to my mother!

I think that all of us in this profession discovered we had a natural proclivity toward it. I really started this career when I was a kid on a farm, swinging from a rope and jumping off of a hay mound.

I was also an actor. I was an overzealous one who would jump from 10 feet in the air and land on my head. I decided that there needed to be a better way to do this, so I started training through gymnastics, competition sword fighting, medieval Renaissance fairs, and falling off of horses—all of which established my skill set.

I went to graduate school at Florida State University/Asolo Conservatory, where I had two years of training in stage combat with Norm Beauregard. After getting my MFA and my Equity card, I was cast as Valvert in *Cyrano de Bergerac* with F. Murray Abraham in 1979. The fight director was none other than B. H. Barry. Then I was cast as Comte de Wardes in *The Three Musketeers*, and the fight

director was David Boushey. To have the experience of being staged by these two gentlemen—with the two best fight directors in the U.S. at the time—was the most valuable training that one could hope for.

It carved out a path of no return for me. Their wisdom and approach to staging remains with me on every production. All paths to fight directing lead back to them. We would not be able to be having this conversation with *SDC Journal* if it were not for the two of them. We would be remiss not to mention their names.

DREW | I discovered sport fencing in my freshman year of college. I was always the scrawny kid in the class, and suddenly fencing seemed like, "Wow, this is something I could do."

Then, in my sophomore year, Joseph Martinez—who is one of the founders of the Society of American Fight Directors—became my movement teacher. Suddenly, I was acting *and* sword fighting. I thought I had died and gone to heaven.

Once I got out of school, I was trying desperately to be an actor. I think I was pretty terrible, but I was able to get some jobs because I had these other skills. I was often hired to be the fight captain or the guy that died a glorious death somewhere downstage.

I ended up following Joseph out to graduate school at Western Illinois University and worked with him pretty closely for four or five years. Then I got into the SAFD world on the ground floor. The rest was kind of history.

TOM | Drew and I actually went to undergrad together, so part of my story is very much the same as his: training in school and then, out of school, working as an actor for many years. Early on, I was a company member at the Folger Shakespeare Theatre for two seasons, which meant a lot of classical works and a fair amount of violence. I was cast in the fighting roles, such as Hector in *Troilus and Cressida*, and was picking up the fight captain position fairly regularly. Around that time, I started training with the Society of American Fight Directors and started choreographing as well.



The cast of the revival of *Zoot Suit*. Written and Directed by Luis Valdez and presented in association with El Teatro Campesino, Center Theatre Group/Mark Taper Forum.

When I moved to New York to pursue an acting career, I stopped doing fight direction. I was afraid of being slotted as “the fight guy.” But I ended up performing fight roles pretty frequently: Athos in *Three Musketeers*—choreographed by Drew, in fact—Mercutio a couple of times, Petruchio. Over about a 10-year period, fight direction crept back into my life and by now, 30 years on, it’s a good 90 percent of what I do. But it’s very much the same story.

GEOFFREY | All of us started with one foot in that acting world.

When you get the script of a play you haven’t staged before, how do you first approach it from a fight director’s perspective?

TOM | I try very hard *not* to approach it as a fight director, at first

On my very first exposure, I sit down with a yellow pad and try to simply read the play as an audience member would experience it, reading it for story and character. I jot down anything that’s salient. That’s where I begin to think about how the fights fit into the play.

After that, I start digging in. But at first, I try to be as open to experiencing the story as I can be.

STEVE | I’ll just back that up. It’s story, story, story. It’s always about why, who these particular people are, and how they’re able to carry out what they’re about to do.

What’s the story? Is there anything that involves an encounter? What happened in the story at some other time that affects the encounters? What happens before an encounter, and what happens after it—why is it there? Just as Tom said, you’ve got to read the play.

GEOFFREY | Do you ever find that you have to go back and reread the plays that you have done many times?

DREW | Oh, there’s always something to learn.

TOM | I agree. It becomes a whole new discovery to reengage with a play. The work is infinitely evolving because you’re infinitely evolving, and the world evolves too, so the same play means different things at different times. It speaks differently, which has to be reflected in your work.

DREW | I would be willing to bet you that all of us would say, “I’ve never used the same choreography twice.” It just doesn’t apply.

Fight work is a very particular thing that happens at a very particular moment. The point about what happens before and what happens after the action is really interesting, and I would absolutely agree. To me, the aftermath is very important.

TOM | The fights are part of a larger context, and you need to honor the entirety of the piece. Sometimes, as a fight director, it’s awfully tempting to think, “I’m going to go in there and make this really cool thing happen.” But that’s like an actor figuring out his character before the first rehearsal. It is just potentially disastrous in terms of how you serve a play.

GEOFFREY | Several of you also work as movement directors, which includes work on any choreography in a show, including character movement, ensemble imagery, character transitions as well as visual composition in scenes. Robert, you often work as both. Is that a different hat from your fight choreographer hat?

ROBERT | For me, they’re always the same hat. I think we’re all movement choreographers.

It’s just specific to a story that the movement is violent. Even in the violent elements, there’s always a movement component.

I think we’re always looking for how to emphasize the strengths of the actors, how they move and tell a story physically. Every actor is different. Every actor has different physical traits, so part of my job as a fight choreographer is to maximize the strengths.

TOM | I concur. It’s all about storytelling, and it’s about safety in physical movement.

Whether your character faints and needs to be lifted into a wheelchair or whether you attack somebody with a dagger, the same things apply. You’re telling a nonverbal story, and you want to tell it safely and repeatably.

GEOFFREY | Let’s talk about that first experience—that very



Scott Drummond, Carson Elrod, Sarah Manton, Claire Karpen in *Bedroom Farce* at Westport Country Playhouse, with fight direction by Robert Westley.

first meeting on the phone or at a coffee shop—when you talk to a director you haven’t worked with before. What do you look for in that conversation to help you in the rehearsal process?

TOM | That “getting to know you” phase is a really important one. That first date.

I try, as much as possible, to get the director to talk so I can listen. To just listen is a good way to start to get an understanding of the production, as the director sees it. Of course, I’ll occasionally have my feelings about things too. I’ve found instances where in order to feed that conversation, I throw in a thought or an idea. Even if it’s wrong, it always leads toward something productive.

STEVE | You can learn a lot from a director during that first meeting. Some of them will say immediately, “This is how I feel about the kind of fighter Tybalt is,” or “This is what I think Blanche DuBois’ real center is and why she needs to strike out.”

Then again, you get a lot of directors who ask, “Well, what are *your* thoughts? How do *you* see it?”

I think we’d all agree that it is so important to get the conversation started and then, hopefully, we’ve read the play so we are ready to participate. Sometimes, though, the play isn’t even discussed. I met **Nicholas Hytner** when

I was going to do *Twelfth Night* with him. He didn’t really want to talk about the play; he just wanted to talk to me and get a feeling for who I was. There are some directors who are like that. It really is a first date. That’s exactly what it is.

ROBERT | In that conversation, what I try to do is figure out what the collaboration is going to be like. What kind of collaborator they are and how they want me to be in the process.

DREW | I’m sure you would all agree that sometimes directors are very specific: “It needs to be *this long*, and we’re going to have this music.” And then some say, “Just don’t let anybody get hurt.”

TOM | In early conversations, I try to get a feel for how the

director wants to work in the room. As Drew said, some directors really want to have a hand in it. Others want to leave you alone in the room with the actors, then come back in and have an opinion. So, it’s often a useful thing to ask, “How would you like me to be in the room with you?”

ROBERT | We adapt our skills as best we can to whether the directors are very hands-on or hands-off.

It’s funny. When you’re working in rep, in the morning, I can be with one director who is actively hands-on and we’re really collaborating, and then in the afternoon, the other director might say, “Let me know when you’re done, and I’ll let you know what I think.” You’re shifting gears on your lunch break.

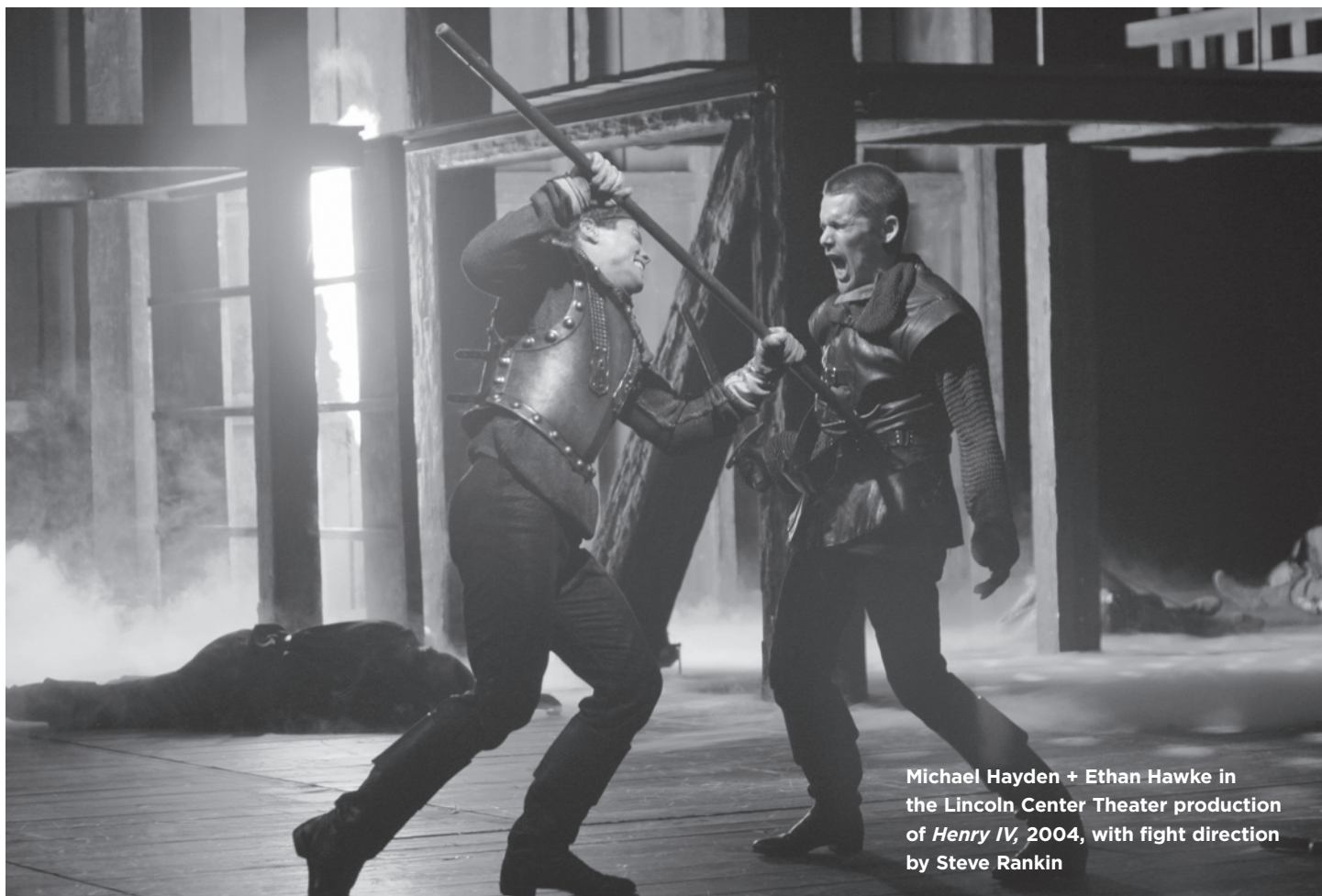
GEOFFREY | Let’s move into the first fight rehearsal with the actors. What goals do you want to achieve?

STEVE | For me, it’s imperative to size up the actors within the first few minutes that I meet them.

The first type of person I look for is someone who is scared. If they’re scared, it’s good, but it’s also bad because they could be dangerous. The second type is the overzealous actor. The “I’ll do anything” type of actor. Again, that’s a good thing because they’re going to be valuable, but it could also be a dangerous thing. The third one, which is the subtlest, is arrogance. “Yes, I’ve played *Cyrano* six times. So I know how to do this.” I go to that person right away and ask, “How do you want to do this?” Meaning, from my point of view, “Do you want it to be difficult, or do you want it to be easy?”

I want to identify those people because then we’re all on the same page, and we can all get to work.

We also have to work within the limitations and capabilities of the actors. That means emotional, mental, and physical capabilities. We’ve got to get inside their heads and figure out how to get the ideas in their minds down into their bodies. So, that’s what I do. I size people up and I ask people to move around.



Michael Hayden + Ethan Hawke in the Lincoln Center Theater production of *Henry IV*, 2004, with fight direction by Steve Rankin

We talk about what we're going to do, and then we try to do a little staging. But it's mostly, again, another first date.

DREW | I think we all have some version of that exact same process, Steve. That makes complete sense to me. I talk to people about their training. I talk to people about their physical past. "Do you have injuries? Do you have a knee I need to think about?" Those kinds of questions.

And then I always try to spend a little time talking to them about character. They've obviously thought a lot about it by the time the first rehearsal rolls around. Is Tybalt really skilled and arrogant, or is he scared? Is he secretly in love with Romeo? I don't know—but you tell me and that will help me make some decisions as I start to think about the actual staging.

ROBERT | That's perfect, Drew. I think a lot of the time the thought is that fight choreographers come in and tell actors exactly what their choices are. The actors forget that they have choices. They have done their work; they know their character.

There has to be a dialogue established with the actors at the beginning so they understand that I am not coming in to tell them what to do. I am there to enhance the choices they are working on. I always want to create a physical vocabulary that everyone can use to collaborate and make the staging unique to that production.

STEVE | I'm getting ready to do a fabulous new play called *Kill Local*, with four women who are a family of assassins. One of the actresses called me before rehearsals started and asked, "How am I going to need to train before I get there? I've got a bad back and I know I'm going to need to do this and this and this..." I needed to calm her down and remind her that the action will be based on her character. How does she relate to the weapons she's going to have?

How can I make her feel comfortable?

GEOFFREY | It's really a series of first dates, then, right? From the first look at the play, then the meeting with the director, then the first rehearsal with the actors.

At the first rehearsal, I like to have the director in the room while we chat through the story as it stands so that if I have an actor who has a really strong opinion about the character and the director disagrees, we can begin that discussion before we start codifying movement that dictates one of those choices.

Then I like to start a little smaller so I can take the temperature of the actors to see where they're at. If they're really taking to it quickly, then we move forward. But if not, I can step back and reevaluate after that first short rehearsal.

I'm currently doing a big production of *Treasure Island*, and I have nine actors moving around with swords. It was nice to have a first rehearsal where I sketched in movement and let them invent things with invisible swords. Just by watching, I could figure out who I needed downstage center, who I needed up center, who needed encouragement, who needed a dictator.

As Steve said, you're trying to read the room as quickly as you can so you can take the tools you have and make the best action you can.

DREW | I also try hard to make sure the actors understand that nothing is etched in stone with anything I'm about to show them at this point in the game. And if it doesn't make sense to their character—if it hurts their knee, if there's an issue—they shouldn't just suck it up and be a martyr. I make it clear they need to tell me and we'll do something else.

GEOFFREY | Let's fast-forward to tech. We've rehearsed our action. We've got it to where we want and now we have all these new

facets—the stage, set, lights, costumes—thrown at us. What’s the main problem you most frequently have to tackle?

DREW | Time.

GEOFFREY | Drew’s one-word answer sums it up, doesn’t it?

DREW | Everybody else gets the time in tech, but they think because you’ve been rehearsing for three weeks, you are all set. The fact of the matter is now it’s all new.

STEVE | Yes to time. Also, the environment. Is everything safe? For example, suddenly, the lighting designer has a bunch of footlights along the front of the stage that you hadn’t planned on when you were creating your movement. It’s going to be right where one of your actors’ heads was supposed to land. So you’ve got to negotiate and arm wrestle with people to make it all safe. Are the sets safe? Are the costumes safe? Is the edge of the stage suddenly too close? Is there scaffolding that somebody’s going to run into? Are the escape stairs safe?

It can be a minefield. But, again, you’re right, Drew; it’s about time. Generally speaking, people are friendly about it, but it’s still a negotiation. I always tell my director that when we get into tech, anytime there is a lull, I’m going to be on stage. If you don’t want me there, just say, “Steve, get off of the stage.”

I won’t take offense at that, but I will try to be a master of five minutes because that’s sometimes all you get.

DREW | You’re so right. If you do that and you are really proactive, everybody wins.

ROBERT | It’s also about the dynamic interaction with lights, sound, and costumes because these other elements can either eliminate or elevate the work you created in the rehearsal room.

I’m constantly saying, “Talk to me about this sound cue” and, “Could we add a layer of frenetic energy to this beat?” or, “Talk to me about that light cue. Is there a way we can time that blackout to cover this?” or, “How do you feel about pushing the audience’s focus over here?” and “Can you help me?”

That collaboration with the right group of tech people is crucial. Sometimes it really is the costume or the new prop or the light effect that actually elevates the violence beyond what I could *ever* have done in the rehearsal room.

STEVE | That collaborative process is so important—which is why it is so important for the producers to recognize the viability of the fight director as part of the creative team. This way, when we get into tech, we’re all working together. Just as the dance choreographer is going to go ask for a light cue, we’re going to as well.

I will also say this about tech: if you, as the fight director, don’t get the time needed, you have to speak up. I always tell my actors that if they feel anything is dangerous, they need to tell me. I will stop the rehearsal and take the heat because I do not want them to get hurt—*ever*.

DREW | I completely agree, Steve. You do have to be on top of that aspect of the process.

The time will get sucked up, and then they’re only going to give you one shot to run your sequence. You have to advocate and say, “No, no, no, no. Everybody else got hours to do their work. Let me do mine now.”

GEOFFREY | Safety takes the front seat for me, and then aesthetic comes back later. The first thing I do is to make sure the actors survive tech, or there won’t be dress rehearsals or previews.

ROBERT | I think all of us would agree that, hopefully, we’ve had enough time that we’ve worked out any potential hitches before we get into tech. Sometimes tech is a negotiation. Sometimes you have to be the good cop, and sometimes you have to be the bad cop. There’s the safety component of it, but everybody also wants a good,

strong story. Sometimes there needs to be a reminder that we’re all here with the same goal—for that story to be told—which means I might need a little more time here.

GEOFFREY | All right, so now it’s opening night. We don’t often do this, but if you were going to say something to your actors before the show started, what would you tell them? What’s your best advice?

STEVE | I’ve thought about this a lot, and I want to tell you something that **Jack O’Brien** told me.

I was doing *Henry IV* at Lincoln Center with Kevin Kline, and I staged a huge battle with 30 people. It was basically a 15-minute sequence in the play in which there are all different kinds of violence. Everybody got to participate. Some people died right away, some people got killed later.

I kept giving notes during previews. Jack pulled me aside and said, “Steve, Steve: you need to realize that they are never ever going to do it exactly the way you want them to do it. Once you realize this, you can give really good, specific notes based upon how they are going to do it now.” That was such a wise piece of advice that let me suddenly release a little bit because everybody was safe. So, on an opening night, what I tell the actors is, “You’re doing great. Just slow down and enjoy the ride.”

DREW | At that stage of the game, I think all you can do is exactly what you’re saying: just be supportive. That’s it.

ROBERT | I like to tell them, “Trust you’ve prepared and that we’ve created the action so you can let it all go and live and respond in the moment. Don’t focus on the choreography. Focus on the moments.”

GEOFFREY | I tell them, “Celebrate the mistakes. We’ve trained to be able to safely make mistakes, so celebrate those. They’ll become

Saluting our SDC Members who are also SAFD Members

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the moments that make it live and breathe as you move forward.” Half of the time, we’ve choreographed those “mistakes” to happen. For instance, the dropping of the dagger or the stumble—that choreography actually keeps the action alive and moving.

Comparing your first fight gigs to now, how has this craft changed since you started working in the field? What has changed technically or artistically for you?

ROBERT | Film and how things are filmed have prepared an audience to be more challenged and have greater expectations. I think cirque and dance have also expanded what our perceived limitations are when it comes to action. These other art forms have allowed for a freedom of physical storytelling that only enhances what is possible with stage violence. That and technology have opened so many doors for keeping actors safe while still creating impact or the illusion of impact.

The challenge for me has been to keep on top of how things have been progressing and make sure that the movement being created on stage is still new and exciting, and encourages an audience to keep coming back.

STEVE | More and more, the audience wants to see movie effects on the stage. To create that kind of impact, you have to have people capable of doing it. You also have to share with the playwrights and directors that people are not going to experience what would be a close-up movie shot in the same way they’re imagining it on the page because people are sitting back 25 rows. So we have to adjust because we’re going to be considering the entire stage when we do it.

I also agree that the technology has changed. The great thing that I celebrate about us as fight directors is that they can’t do this without us. If it’s film, they can use CGI. But when you can only use the raw material and the actors’ physical capabilities to do this in the theatre, you can’t replace this craft. That’s the great thing about doing theatre—they need us to tell these three-dimensional stories.

DREW | I would agree with everything everybody has said. Also, our tools are much better. The technical director didn’t make them in his garage over the weekend.

GEOFFREY | The swords aren’t made out of rebar anymore.

DREW | Exactly. And I think there is a huge new percentage of people who have skills and training. There was a time when you basically started from scratch on every show you did. You had to teach that this is the end of the sword you hold.

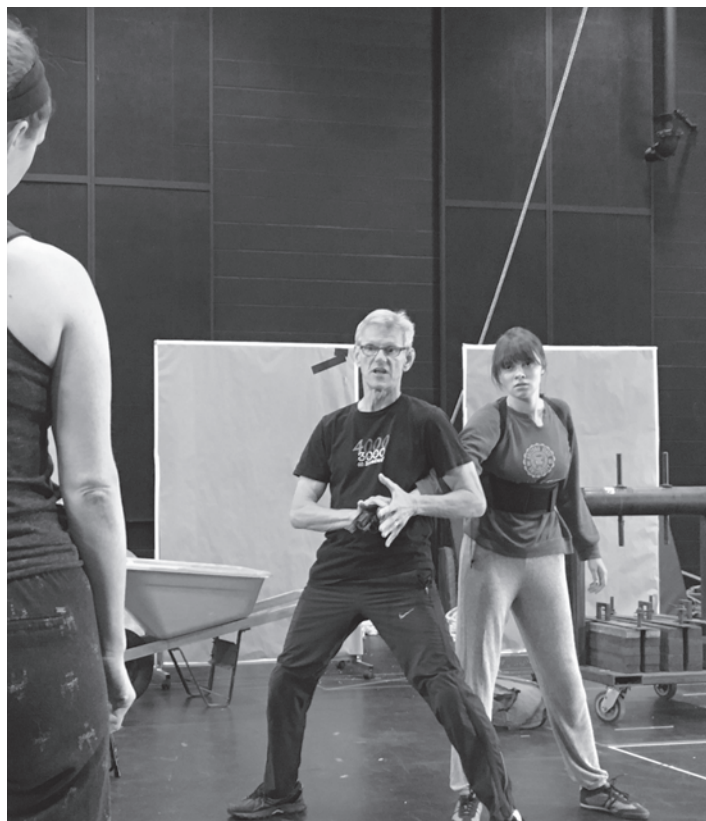
But, boy, the vast majority of people that I’ve come in contact with lately have had some sort of training. I think that’s helped a lot in terms of giving us a broader range of options when it comes to telling stories. Directors are also more tuned in to our work and more opinionated about it, which I think is a good thing.

ROBERT | I agree about the directors. I’m definitely finding directors who are excited to communicate about the violence of their show, and they are raising their expectation of it.

DREW | Exactly. They have some expectations now. For a long time, you were given free rein to do whatever you wanted, which isn’t necessarily a good thing.

GEOFFREY | For me, the evolution has been prevalent in thrust theatre and theatre-in-the-round. I’m working in those predominantly right now. The techniques have adapted. We’re evolving past the kind of upstage, downstage, clap knaps—where an actor uses his or her hands to create the sound of impact for a punch or hit that doesn’t actually make contact. We’re moving into action that’s much more sleight of hand.

It’s nice to feel that our form is evolving past where it started. Fight direction is young compared to the other design disciplines. We have so many gaps in our knowledge of how they really executed stage fights at certain times. We’re playing a little catch-up with those



Steve Rankin works with Carolyn Braver in rehearsal for *Kill Local* at La Jolla Playhouse.

OPPOSITE: Joe Curnutte + Randolph Curtis Rand in *Fifth Third Bank’s Dracula* at Actors Theatre of Louisville, 2014, with fight direction by Drew Fracher

other artists, but we’re evolving. And not just in terms of moving toward cinematic action, but also embracing the theatricality of violence and what it can do that film can’t.

I have been in the profession for the past 20 years, and I wouldn’t want to look back at the things I created in the late ’90s. The skills I could bring to that room now would be so much different. And, as Drew said, the actors have evolved as well. Partially, the reason we’re getting more options is we’re more often getting a chance to work with people who can run with those ideas, enhance them, and make them better.

How about you, Tom? Have you found it’s changed much since you’ve started?

TOM | I couldn’t agree more with Drew, Steve, and Robert. I particularly feel that pressure of expectations primed by movies.

As for change, the only other thing I can think to add is that I’ve recently been working with some directors who have developed a very unadorned, dry, prosaic style of storytelling. **Sam Gold** is a brilliant example of this. Annie Baker, as a playwright, seems to do this too. They strip away so much to expose the essence of the story and relationship, and the results are deeply human.

I’ve been lucky to work with Sam on a few things, recently *Othello* at New York Theatre Workshop and the *Hamlet* currently at the Public Theater. I don’t know whether any of you saw his *Glass Menagerie* this season. It was a very empty stage. The actors wore rehearsal clothes, with a folding table and a few chairs. The acting was very simple and direct. I’ve found that kind of aesthetic affects how I’m being asked to approach the violence. Just like the acting, the action wants to be simpler: unspectacular and very exposed.



From a technical standpoint this is tough, because a lot of the tools we usually use to hide techniques and generate the sort of energy that experiencing violence should convey—such as our knaps and non-contact blows—become less useful. I don't know that I've completely cracked the code yet, but I see this type of challenge showing up more.

GEOFFREY | As we start to wrap up this conversation, I want to talk about the wonderful Agreement that was negotiated between SDC and the League of Resident Theatres. Now, for the first time in history, we have union recognition in a collectively bargained Agreement. We now come to the table with the representation that every other director, choreographer, designer, actor, and stage manager I've worked with has had. What does that mean to you—to your work—as professional fight directors and choreographers?

DREW | I've been involved with this effort for several years. There was a time before when we tried to get coverage, and it was like herding cats. Nobody could agree. It feels to me that we, as fight directors, have finally been able to find some common ground and sit down and talk to each other. I think that was one of the biggest takeaways from this process. Now there's a much better exchange between us across the board.

If you just want to talk about the basics, think to yourself, "Wow, I have access to healthcare. That's a radical concept for a fight director." As you just said, Geoffrey, everybody else in the room has had that for a long time, and we've been the red-headed stepchildren. I think a lot of that was our own fault, but a lot of that was the result of producers not wanting yet another expenditure on their docket. But I'll tell you, I haven't found anybody yet from the management side of things or an artistic director who hasn't said to me, "That's a long time coming and that's a darn good thing."

I'm sure the people having to pay the bills are wishing they didn't have to deal with this, but I think everybody is reacting positively. I'm really, really thrilled.

STEVE | I am too because now we're going to be considered in the process when they are putting the productions together. We're not an afterthought anymore.

Before this coverage, the theatres wouldn't bring us in from the start. Suddenly, an actor would get hurt because somebody wasn't staging something correctly, and then they would bring us in late in the process in the middle of a tenuous situation. That's no good. Our consideration in the process needs to be earlier. Now they have to think of us when they are putting together the finances.

ROBERT | We're a budget line item now.

DREW | Exactly. And it's already happening. I've recently had a theatre contact me about jobs way in the future, radically earlier than ever before.

ROBERT | That is good news. In addition to empowering our collaborative voice, which this coverage enhances, personally, I want to speak to the pride that I now have when I walk into the room: I am represented by a union. It has given me even more of a sense of belonging that wasn't as fully present as it is now.

TOM | From a completely practical standpoint, in the past you or your agent, if you're lucky enough to have one, have always had to negotiate from essentially a zero position because there was no union contract. There were no given protections, given standards, like property rights.

GEOFFREY | For me, I act, direct, and fight direct. Every year, I've had to make sure I get enough acting jobs to qualify for health insurance because that was the only option I had. So, my career path has been dictated by health insurance!

This movement with SDC and LORT's recognition actually allows me to pick and choose what project I work on from an artistic standpoint, not based on which job will get me to the doctor or fix my teeth. It sounds small, but it means a great deal because it opens up what I can do artistically.

STEVE | Thank you for asking me to be a part of this discussion. I've enjoyed the discourse with all of you so very much. I don't get enough of it. I look forward to being able to see you all face-to-face and continue this conversation.

GEOFFREY | I completely agree. Let's do it every Tuesday! I always tend to stay in my market because I'm out here in the middle of America. I rarely get to see other people's work, and we all grow by seeing other people's choices. It's really helpful to talk with this group of colleagues, to hear about the different routes everyone took into this profession, and to be self-affirmed by learning that we all have similar feelings about the room, the director, the script, and the tech process. Now when I get in my head during a rehearsal process, I will remember that we all struggle with the same problems. Any other final thoughts?

DREW | I would just add that the best part of the job for me is facilitating the actor's job, making it simpler and safer for them to do the action every single night. So I would just say to directors: let me come to rehearsal. Use me. If you're going to hire me, let me come and have input throughout the course of the production because I would like to think I can make everybody's job easier. And that's really satisfying.

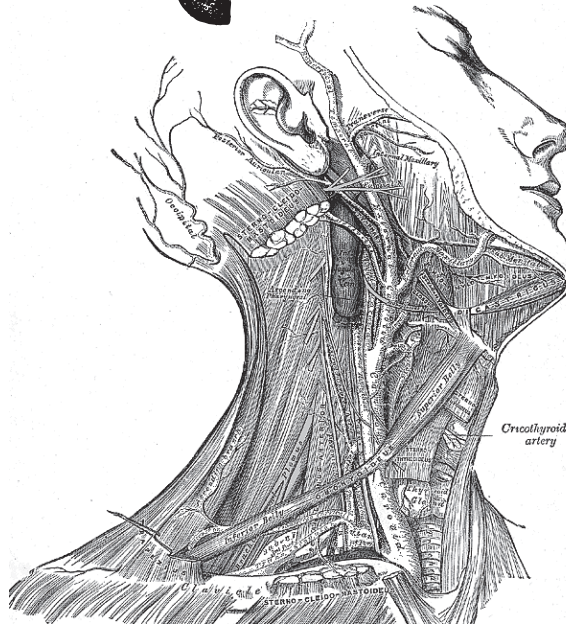
And, of course, thanks to all who negotiated the new SDC/LORT Agreement, for making all of that happen.

ROBERT | It means the world to all of us. I'm excited to see where this continues to go, and I'm excited for us to have more conversations like this to keep growing together.

TOM | Amen to that.

GEOFFREY | Thanks for taking the time, everyone. I look forward to talking to you again soon. —

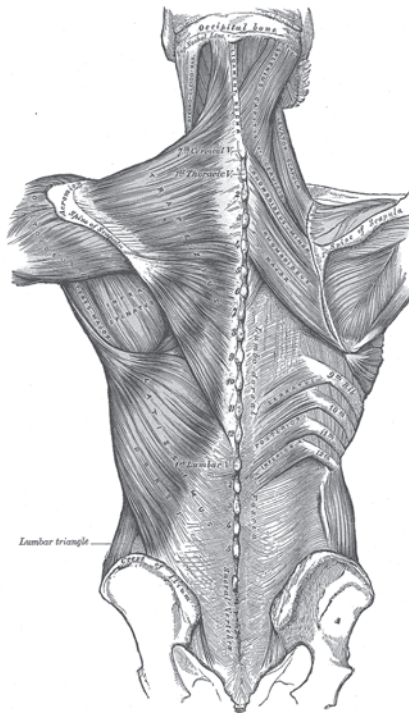
BLOODY CONSEQUENCES



BY SARAH WALSH

Pain and death are two inevitable consequences of existing. As we go through life this knowledge makes us more aware of our surroundings and our bodies. In stage combat we oftentimes play with this awareness, and how it affects the way that we fight. But no matter how much experience a character has, their body will still react to pain, whether it be a conscious or unconscious reaction. So how do we portray these reactions in a medically accurate way? First we must understand what is happening during these attacks and injuries. My understanding of these injuries comes from being a medic, and I have witnessed some of these results firsthand.

At the base of every good staged fight there is an understanding of basic biology and physics. When sliced with a sword or sharp object, a person's muscles will clamp around the foreign body to try to prevent further harm. Due to this, the body is pulled in the same direction as the cut is going. The physics aspect of this can also be applied to physical blows; a jaw will follow the line the punch is making. This is where isolation really

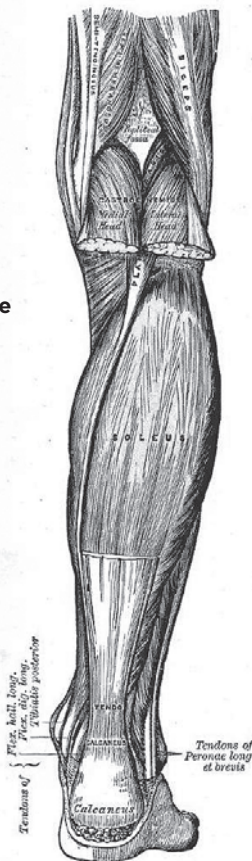


comes in handy. The more specific the group of muscles clamping onto the weapon or reacting to the blow, the more gruesome the attack. Of course reactions and placement can also depend on the type of damage one is aiming to portray.

When exploring different targets, I will be using the sections of the body according to Krav Maga principles: high, middle, and low. High targets include the head, jaw, neck and throat. Middle targets include the heart, collarbone, kidneys and spine. And low targets include the groin, knee, hamstring and ankle. There are more likely to be fatal strikes in the high and middle sections than in the low, but exceptions include the femoral artery, which is located in the thigh. There are also specific areas which to attack, but the aim of this article is a more of a basic overview of popular injuries.

A character going for high targets is more than likely searching for a finishing blow. Although a scene doesn't always have to conclude in death, knockouts and loss of consciousness can dictate an end. A knockout occurs when someone has been hit on the head with such force it causes the brain to slam into the

OPPOSITE, BOTTOM:
The human spinal cord. The spinous process is located near the top.



When we choreograph cuts to the lower region of the body, we often underplay injuries in order to continue fighting. True cuts or slashes to the legs have a potential to render the leg useless, due to incapacitating muscles or tendons that facilitate movement. Two major targets to demonstrate this with are the hamstrings and the Achilles tendon. The hamstrings are most vulnerable on the back of the thigh right above the knee. Taking a sword and severing these muscles ensures regular movement isn't possible, due to their connection through the knee and hip joints. Similarly, the Achilles tendon connects your heel to your calf, and would render the leg close

Please keep in mind that the information given here is an informed suggestion based on years of medical and combat knowledge. There will always be exceptions to every rule, and some rules are broken simply to make people look better, or to keep a fight going past the point it would realistically stop. It's important to remember that stage combat is an art, and as long as the performers are safe, can be

interpreted thousands of different ways. ❦

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Fight Matters

A Fight Directo

BY JOSEPH TRAVERS, SAFD FD/CT

Over many years and many projects as a fight director, I've often found myself at a rehearsal, wanting or needing something I didn't have with me at the time. Many years ago, this moved me to begin to create a "fight director's tool kit" comprised of items that could be useful or necessary for a variety of rehearsal needs, from early choreography rehearsals through technical rehearsals. In this piece, I'll be sharing the items found in my full kit now. Many of my colleagues have undoubtedly developed their own kits, but perhaps this article will inspire you with a new item or two! If you have items in your kits that you don't see here, please share.

Enjoy!

Early rehearsals

Early rehearsals involve meeting cast and creative team, getting to know the space, the play, the director's vision, and beginning to shape what the fights will be like. For this part of the rehearsal period, there are a variety of items included in the kit that can make all these tasks easier.

In order to best serve the project, taking care of one's self should be a top priority. I always keep Airborne, cough drops, tissues and some ibuprofen in the kit.

Taking care of the actors, their safety and their comfort is of course vital as well, so the kit contains hand sanitizer and breath mints (for me), and knee-pads in two sizes (for the actors). I want the actors to feel comfortable engaging with me at what sometimes will be close proximity and to have the option of elbow or knee protection

when applicable. So that I'm prepared for any emergencies, a small first aid kit, a small CPR mask, and latex gloves are also standard.

I usually bring a multi-tool. It's often useful if the project involves weapons, and frequently even if it doesn't. I use the Leatherman Core, which features English and metric rulers, a small flat file, serrated knife, small saw, bottle and can opener, three sizes of flat-bladed screw driver, a Phillips-head screw driver, clip-pointed knife, an awl with thread loop, regular and needle-nose pliers and wire cutters. All the tools lock in place when opened. (As I'm writing this, I've discovered that the Core was retired by Leatherman some time ago, but there are still some on the shelves, and there are a variety of other comparable multi-tools on the market.) Whether it's for filing a burr I've found on a blade or piercing another hole in a sword belt, tools like this can be very handy in the rehearsal hall.

r's Tool Kit

Early staging can depend a lot on the nature of the space - its size, shape, relation to the audience, etc., so I include a 25' measuring tape and some spike tape in a couple of colors. I may want to try setting a mark in the space where I want a particular moment in the fight to occur, and the measuring tape and spike tape can help me experiment with that. The kit also includes a small flashlight, so I can examine the extremities of the space as well (you never know what you'll find that an actor can roll or stumble onto - staples, splinters, nails, etc.) I use a small Mag-Lite. I find putting a lanyard ring in the hole provided at the butt end comes in handy, especially later in techs.

Recording choreography, questions and notes for myself and the actors (and possibly the SM, designers and director) means always having pens, pencils (mechanical), sharpies (in 3 colors), post-it notes (3"), scissors, a straight ruler, a magnifying glass, and some 3x5 index cards. While not part of the kit directly, I also always carry additional pens, pencils and a note pad, (either steno or 8 1/2 x 11) to every rehearsal, usually in my briefcase. (I have recently begun to shift to using an I-pad for note-taking, but frequently, for ease of writing and for portability, I still rely on paper).

Ever mindful of the importance of making contacts, I also make sure I have plenty of business cards to hand out.

Technical rehearsals

I always enjoy techs - it's a very different atmosphere with a different tone and rhythm from the time in the rehearsal hall, and it also provides increased face-to-face interaction with the other designers. I augment the kit for techs, and depending on the specifics of the project, the tech-related equipment can vary.

I usually bring a book lite for note taking as I move around the

house during runs, and a lanyard to clip my mag-lite onto if needed as I walk around. I have a 6' extension cord (with adapter) to use for charging my cell phone or laptop.

For any sword or weapon maintenance that may be needed at this point, there's a pair of work gloves, a small pair of vise-grips, the multi-tool, an 8 in. flat file, and a small cleaning kit (3 in 1 oil, rag, Scotch Brite pad for use on metal).

Because anything can happen, I have a military grade, portable cell-phone re-charger, a 3" heavy-duty carabiner, some sandwich-size and snack-size zip-lock bags (improvised blood packs), some 1/4 inch high-density foam (improvised actor-padding), and a length of theater tie-cord (about 3').

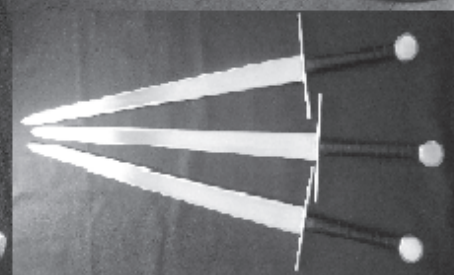
One of the fun challenges over time has been finding the right bag for all of this equipment. Professional tool bags are well-made and sometimes good for tech, but are too bulky for earlier rehearsals. Knapsacks don't usually have enough separated compartments (for ease of access), and a brief case doesn't provide enough room. I'm always on a search for the perfect bag, but I currently use a small camera bag almost all the time. Its interior dividers are movable, it's light-weight and sturdy, and only about 11" by 7".

I realize some of the equipment I carry might be on site when I get to rehearsal. (Most SMs usually have plenty of spike tape, a tape measure or two, and most spaces have some sort of First Aid kit). Still, for ease of access, and for those occasions (more often than you'd think) when something I need isn't where I'd expect, a well-stocked tool kit is a great way to stay covered and be prepared.

I hope you find this useful - have fun in rehearsal! ✂



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Violence Literacy



By Nicolas Cabrera

I love stage combat and HEMA (Historical European Martial Arts). I love telling a story through violence on stage and showing off character's skill. I love studying, learning, and practicing fencing techniques from people who lived hundreds of years ago and getting to experience history rather than simply reading about it in a book. I would love nothing more than to bring these two together to create fights that are exciting, new, fun, realistic, highly skilled, and tell a more in-depth and detailed story. At R&D Choreography in Chicago we get to do this quite a bit, combining historical techniques and stage combat to tell more interesting and historical stories with our fights. However when I bring up the inclusion of HEMA into stage combat, I'm often met with the same three arguments; it's too dangerous, it can't tell a story, and the audience won't know the difference anyway. I hope to address each argument in separate articles since they each deserve their own and in the future go into more detail about how to incorporate HEMA into stage combat since the concepts and idea that can be taken away from HEMA also deserve their own articles. Before I can do that I feel it is important to first dispel some of the myths about HEMA being active in choreography, starting with the idea that the audience won't know the difference between historically accurate and traditional staged choreography.

I personally don't like the argument that the audience wouldn't know the difference between historical or realistic combat and stage

combat. It feels to me like an excuse to not try anything new, but then I'll concede I'm talking about a very select few people. Most people in theatre are willing to jump at the possibility of trying new things, but simply do not have all the facts and often believe the myth that audiences don't know what real or historical fights look like so we shouldn't do it. My intention is to disprove this myth by discussing a very important idea: violence literacy is a thing, and modern audiences not only have it to a certain degree but can sense it as well.¹

Violence Literacy is a term I modified from the idea of *film literacy*. Let's first talk about what film literacy is. When looking at film, the average audience member does not possess the ability or vocabulary to explain why a film is a bad film, but they do possess the ability to *know*, or *feel*, if a film is good or bad. If you look at critic sites like Rotten Tomatoes where they have both the critic score and the audience score, they are generally similar. The difference is that the critic can explain why a film is bad in terms of story-telling, cinematography, editing, etc. because they are literate in those things. Critics know what parallax, the hero's journey and a long shot is but the average audience member does not have this vocabulary. This doesn't mean the audience is dumb; it means that they haven't spent years immersed in the craft of filmmaking. Despite this they can still recognize a bad movie. The audience may be illiterate when it comes to film vocabulary but they can still tell a good story from a bad. The same is true for violence.

It would be weird if Christopher Nolan's *Dark Knight* Trilogy had



LEFT: Vincent Oltion and Abram Sayre at the University of Wyoming broadsword class from 2015. Choreography by Kevin Inouye.

ABOVE: Lucas Flansha and David Beach practicing technique at the University of Wyoming 2015 broadsword class, taught by Kevin Inouye.

Batman fight the way Adam West's Batman fought, with clearly corny and exaggerated punches. This points to the growth of modern audience's understanding of what a fight should look like, made stronger by the popularity of sports such as MMA. The audience has trouble accepting a fight that does not reach a certain level of believability when it relates to the world they themselves occupy. Choreographers need to also be aware that audiences are no longer as illiterate as they once were. The audience might not know the difference between the terms "longsword" and "broadsword" but if you give a Roman general a small sword to fight with, the audience will do a double take.

Even with swords the average audience can recognize what "fake fighting" looks like. Fights in film get praised when they are innovative and progressive. I don't think it's because they are more easily accessible than stage plays however. People across the country love plays, and always talk about the performances, the set, the story, costumes, etc. Take, for example, the popularity of *Hamilton*, which is innovative, progressive, and moving in all its aspects of creativity, using rap instead of traditional musical style and multiracial casting of historical figures. Fighting for stage, however has largely stayed the same for years, which is why it often goes unpraised in theatre as opposed to film. It's often "good enough," but nothing audiences haven't really seen before. It remains true that while the audience doesn't know about half cuts, counter-parries, or patinandos, they will still recognize that it is something they have seen before and that it is "fake fighting."

Today, the internet, entertainment media, and mass media offers people greater exposure to what violence actually looks like, or what graphic film violence looks like. This is why the old western film punch doesn't really work as the "standard" punch anymore in films or onstage. It's slower, more telegraphed, and more cartoonish now than hard hitting when compared to a real fight you might see

between (for example) two passengers on an airplane. If you have a drunken brawl in a bar set in Chicago at midnight, it would feel odd to the audience if you have characters fighting like Kung Fu warriors when the script doesn't call for it. The audience doesn't have Kung Fu literacy, but they can still tell that it's unrealistic and fake². That's the core of violence literacy, it can still be felt. It crosses over with swords as well. Gone are the days where you can simply hit each other's swords over and over again. Audiences want to see committed attacks, plans and counter plans, struggles and close calls. Audiences can tell when you're trying to hit a person and when you're trying to hit their metal stick.

Audiences recognize what stage combat is and it's one of the reasons that fights on stage look different than those on screen. Look at a recording on YouTube of a rapier sword fight for the stage and it will look very different from the famous scene in *The Princess Bride*. Both were filmed on camera but one was stage combat and the other was film choreography. As a result, the audience files them into two different categories and will most likely think, "the movie fight was better than the play" and then follow up with "but it's a play so they could not do it as well." The thing is, however, we can. If we look at *The Princess Bride* sword fights, there is a lot of static and long/medium shots where the audience can see everything. It is filmed much the same way one might film a staged play. They don't use a ton of camera tricks, quick cuts, or clever angles to make the fight engaging. The fight is engaging because of the actors and the moves. We are getting to see them rather than have them hidden with shaky camera technique and conveniently placed lights and objects. Once could put that on stage and it would still look good.

Films like *The Matrix*, *John Wick*, *The Raid*, eastern martial arts cinema, and people like Bruce Lee, William Hobbes, Yuen Woo-Ping, and Donnie Yen have set a standard of fighting (intentionally or not) that audiences expect to see. It moved fights away from the style of Errol Flynn, Adam West, and John Wayne, styles of fighting that were everywhere in their time. This is not to say that these styles don't have their place or are no longer entertaining, they are simply no longer the standard or as complex as what is done today. However to say that staged violence can't be as good as film violence is just wrong. Which is why, in my opinion HEMA (Historical European Martial Arts) or WMA (Western Martial Arts) would be the next logical step in the evolution of fighting for stage and screen and we shouldn't believe the myth that it wouldn't make a difference to audience members.

It's true that there are a lot of things that film can do that theatre simply can't, but that is where innovation and creativity comes about. We used to light theaters with candles and oil lamps, we used to use shadows to do creatures. We now have multicolored led lights and puppets and projection. Innovators used facial motion capture for the magic mirror in *Shrek the Musical*. With other aspects of theatre shifting and innovating to create new ways of telling a story, why should stage fighting be any different? We should evolve and innovate rather than sticking to methods from old Olympic fencing days.

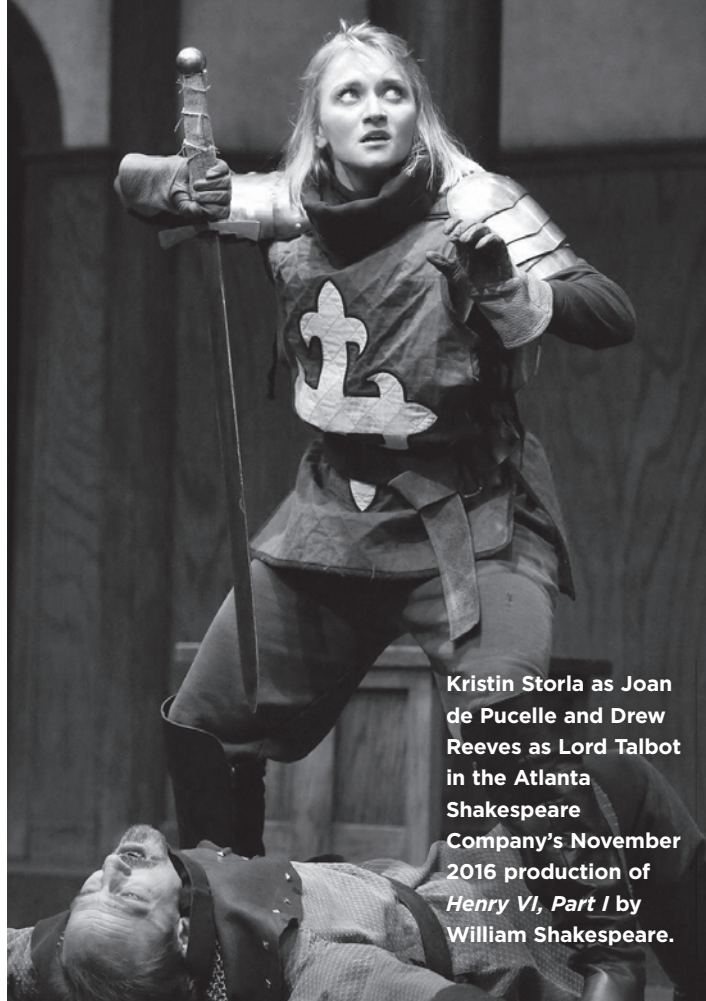
Fighting using historical and realistic techniques is possible for the stage without sacrificing safety or storytelling. Just because you are using historical fencing moves does not mean you cannot tell a story with them. You can still show your intention to kill, to defend, to protect, injure or disable, in addition to fear, bravery, cowardice, confidence or apprehension. Story is not determined by the moves you make but by how you make them. Regardless of if I am making a half cut from HEMA or a cast cut from SAFD, if I show that I am afraid in my attack, or simply wish to wound not kill, it can be done.

The fight is a vehicle for the story, but not what the story is. You can tell a story simply by what guard you stand in, how close you're willing to get, and overall fighting style. The audience does not know the names of the moves, guards, styles, but they still recognize the body language and facial expressions the character is giving off and understand that characters (not actors) are actually fighting. The audience still may not be literate in HEMA or stage combat to explain in detail what is going on but they can feel it and will know how dangerous the fight between the characters is.

One last note about violence literacy is that it is not our job as artists to keep audiences illiterate. To steal one more idea from film literacy, Nerdwriter1, a YouTube essay writer posits the reason we get many lowest common denominator films is that:

"the movie going public suffers from cinematic illiteracy. We don't know what makes a good film so the industry serves up superficial projects that play on cheap emotions, and make us into passive viewers. But learning film is always an active enterprise; all great movies are teaching movies because they encourage us to participate with them and with the whole of cinema."

All great fights should be teaching fights, just like in film. We shouldn't make the audience simply sit there and let the fight happen in front of them, understanding it completely because we make sure that they see every individual move and subtext that goes with it. We should make the audience go "wait, how did they do that?" Make the audience engage with the fight and learn from it. A fight helps to define a world. It introduces the audience to the way violence is both perceived and received in the universe of the play and thus teaches the audience about the world they inhabit. A great fight should teach



Kristin Storla as Joan de Pucelle and Drew Reeves as Lord Talbot in the Atlanta Shakespeare Company's November 2016 production of *Henry VI, Part I* by William Shakespeare.

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the audience not only about fighting and violence but the world of the play as well.

HEMA and WMA can be great resources to pull from to tell an in depth story the audience can recognize. It can teach a lot about tactical thinking and martial planning. Not only can it teach new moves for weapons we already have like rapier and longsword (watch any HEMA longsword bout online and you will most likely see moves you have never seen done with a SAFD two handed broadsword), there are several that also teach weapons and moves we rarely see on stage or film like sickle, spear, side sword, messer, montante, poleaxe, and much more. I hope to expand on some of these in future articles but I will stay focused on my specific point. The idea that an audience can't recognize the difference between realistic, historical fighting and stage combat, so we shouldn't bother trying to blend them, is not true. I don't think we should let the audience settle for that they are getting but push them to expand and learn beyond what they have been given. This does not mean that we should do away with the old way of doing stage combat. There are a lot of great things it can be used for depending on the show you are performing, but we shouldn't treat them as the only way to do it and should attempt to expand the audience's violence literacy by first admitting that violence literacy is a real thing we should take into consideration when designing violence but illiteracy is not an excuse to not try new things. ✚

Endnotes

- 1 I know that there are arguments about safety to be made as well, but as I mentioned in the introduction, I will be addressing that specific argument in another essay.
- 2 Unless there is a comedic set-up in the script to address the tonal shift, of course. Broadly speaking, settings have a tendency to define styles.

BRIEF NOTES ON THE PHYSICAL STAGES OF DEATH, THE PSYCHOLOGY OF KILLING



AND AN EXERCISE

By David Woolley, Fight Master, SAFD

A theatrical death is a defining moment in a play. All parties are forever changed by the action of theatrical killing. What is the impression that you want to leave with the audience? How should they feel about the death, or the killer? How do you feel about your own passing? How do your scene partners feel about your passing? Some stage deaths are swift, some are lingering, but all are the closing of a life which was full.

A death must be convincing and compelling, whether you are soldier #3 or Cleopatra. It has consequences that will have lasting effects (on the victim and the killer...). The internet is an amazing tool which may allow an actor to find the physical aspects of dying from a specific wound, poisoning or disease.

For a solid exploration of the final moments of life, however, I turn to Buddhist monks, who have outlined the physical and mental “Stages of Death,” in the Tibetan Book of the Dead. For exploration of the responses to killing, “On Killing” by Lt Col. Dave Grossman is a comprehensive study. By combining these processes, a compelling death scene can be created.

From a summarization of the stages of death from the Tibetan Book of the Dead, the person who is dying goes through four stages of death. They are: The Losses of Earth, Water, Fire and Air. Let’s take a look at each:

- Loss of Earth: Physically, a thinning of the body. Internally, there is a feeling of weightlessness and a “mirage-like” appearance in the mind.

ABOVE: Lucas Hedges (Hench) after the initial blood test for the Manhattan Class Company/ Lucille Lortel Theater’s 2017 production of *Yen*, directed by Trip Cullman.

- **Loss of Water:** Physically, the mouth and tongue become very dry and the liquids of the body such as urine, blood, and sperm decrease. Internally there is a “smoke-like” appearance in the mind.

- **Loss of Fire:** Physically, dissolution of warmth of the body and coldness in the navel (the center of the body’s heat). Internally, the mind takes on a “sparkling-fireflies-like” appearance.

- **Loss of Air:** Physically, there is a reduced power of movement due to a decreasing power of the wind in the channels of the body which cause us to generate “gross minds”; Internally, the mind takes on a “candle-flame-like” appearance. This is the last mind of death.¹

The person who is responsible for the death also goes through stages, “thus some may skip stages or blend them or pass through them so fleetingly that they do not acknowledge their presence”²:

- Concern about being able to kill
- The killing circumstance itself
- Exhilaration from the kill
- Remorse and nausea from the kill
- Rationalization and acceptance

Practicing these stages in a rehearsal process will offer an actor insight to creating a believable and memorable death speech or scene. allow the survivor to create a realistic portrayal of the role of a killer.

THE EXERCISE

Below are three exercises I have developed that help actors discover moments in both the act of dying and the act of killing. Use these exercises in your rehearsal process (if you have time) to really promote an understanding of what happens to a character in these moments.

I. Explore the stages of Death using the following theatrical ideas, modified from the two excerpts mentioned above.

- Take your time. Play to the balcony. Share all with both the audience and scene partner.
- **Loss of Earth** - play gravity becoming very strong. Fight it rather than giving in right away. The body begins to get heavy and sinks to the ground- attempt to stay erect- kneel, sit then fall.
- **Loss of Water**- Take the time to bleed out. Void bladder and colon. Get thirsty.
- **Loss of Fire**- start to get cold. Shiver. Curl in to fetal position. Systems shutting down. Get to a side so the audience doesn’t watch you breathe.
- **Loss of Air**- final breath. Loud exhalation into a death rattle. Eyes open. Can often use the last word or phrase to release the air.
- After final breath, see fireflies or sparks rising. Allow extremities to twitch slowly as the system short circuits out (keep it simple- a finger, a foot...maybe 3-5 times then stop)

II. Explore the psychological responses of the killer to performing the act.

When stabbing someone, the physical connection between killer and victim is at its closest. The heartbeat and breathing of the victim is transmitted through the weapon to the hand of the killer.

- It is harder to pull a weapon out than to put it in.
- Watch the victim die – give them the respect- you took their life, watch it go
- Euphoria (fixation with euphoria becomes sociopathic)
- Nausea and remorse (fixation with remorse becomes PTSD)
- Rationalization and acceptance (much later)

III. Create a short piece of choreography with knife or sword ending in killing thrust. Allow the thrust to hold in place, work to extract it. The victim must:

- 1) apply direct pressure to the wound (break the blood pack);
- 2) look at wound to see how bad it is and reapply the pressure (check the blood pack and try to break it again)
- 3) show the wound to a friend/scene partner/audience (display horrifying blood), reapply the pressure.
- 4) movement will affect the wounded area, play the pain
- 5) use breath, consonants, and vowel sounds throughout the action
- 6) the Killer needs to play their responses (euphoria and nausea) as the victim perishes. Watch the whole sequence, support the dying partner if needed, drop them safely and exit.

Allow the actors to take as much time as they want to die. They may wish to die on their killer. Allow the killer to take as much time as they need before exiting.

Once all the participants of the exercise have performed, discuss the effect different actions have upon the audience and the performers.

In conclusion, creating a believable thought process, physical action and through-line is an actor’s job. These “stages of death” and “responses to killing” will aid an actor working through “death” speeches and scenes both modern and classical. Commit fully to the action, allow the director to say, “that’s enough!” Break a Leg and Die Brilliantly! ✂

Bibliography

Grossman, Lt. Col. Dave. *On Killing; The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*. Open Road Media, 1995.
Book of the Dead. Tibet. Publisher Unknown. Copyright Unknown.

Endnotes

- 1 <http://www.death-and-dying.org/stages-of-death.htm>
- 2 P 231 *On Killing; The Psychological Cost of Learning to Kill in War and Society*, Lt Col. Dave Grossman 1995



Theatre for Youth Techniques for the Stage Combat Classroom

BY JAMIE MACPHERSON



Students at
First Act
Children's
Theater



Jamie Macpherson (left), her assistant Dylan Todd (right), and a young actor (kneeling) working through a scene.

As a community, we are drawn to the SAFD and to stage combat in general from a variety of paths. Some of us found our way through martial arts training, some are actors who happened to have a strong aptitude for movement and physical theatre styles. Some are drawn to the history, others from the magic of seeing superheroes fight on T.V. As for me, I found my way into the world of stage combat while getting my Masters in Theatre for Youth.

As a field, Theatre for Youth (TFY) is wide and varied, focused on partnering with young people in many different ways. We are puppeteers, theatre artists, educators, community arts organizers, and every combination in-between. What holds us together is our belief that theatre has a positive and transformational impact on young people, and that these theatrical experiences should be high quality and thoughtful in their approach. It is easy, then, to see the overlap with stage combat practices. In both disciplines, we balance the process of learning and discovery with the effort to make the

final product as clean and specific as possible. In the same way that I find joy in working with my fight partner, I get satisfaction from my partnerships with young people as they make discoveries and create work in which they take pride.

Working as a teaching artist, I get to share a subject that I love with young people (a term I use here to refer to 8-16 year olds). I get to roll around on the floor and brandish swords with them and yell “courageous” (more often ridiculous) challenges to imaginary foes. I also get to witness young people gain confidence and a level of professionalism as they begin to take ownership of the fight moves we’re practicing. This is a time when most young people are beginning to shape an understanding of themselves through their abilities: what are they good at, what do they like doing? There is a mental hunger to deepen their knowledge in areas of interest. Also, young bodies are still developing, which means they’re just starting to push the limits of their physical capabilities. With guidance from someone who helps them feel capable, young people can pair self-discipline with their interest in stage combat to cultivate ownership of their abilities as actor combatants.

For example: a seventh grade boy came into my class with very little body awareness, and though he was excited to get to hold a sword, he was concerned he'd hit someone by accident. It didn't occur to him that he might have control over where his sword was pointed. I watched him work hard to master a fight scene, taking the parries and attacks I gave him and translating it into a language that made sense to him: the "flashlight" parry (a 3-4-3 parry), windshield wipers (2-3 parry combo), using the sword to say "oh hell no!" (parrying with a 7). He had taken ownership of his fight, and perhaps without being fully aware, he had developed his own creative process, one where he could be successful. As he worked, I was able to switch my role to being the outside eye, watching from the sidelines, on hand if he needed me.

So what can TFY offer Stage Combat? The goal of this article is to share insight I have gained from my work in the world of Theatre for Youth, and frame it in the context of teaching young people stage combat. To examine strategies that target the cognitive, social, and motor skills of pre- and adolescent students. This list is not necessarily a summative checklist of how to be a good teacher - there are many ways to teach well. Rather, I will focus on the ways in which one sub-field of theatre can help another. This is in part to call attention to some of the things we as stage combat instructors do well naturally, and in part to offer new ways of thinking about our methods for when we work with young actors.

Structuring a Class Session

A colleague of mine once likened a class session to a brownie - as long as the edges are solid, the middle can be as gooey and fluid as it needs to be. In other words, the first and last ten minutes are critical to having a strong lesson. Think about how you want students to enter the space, to get them in the right headspace, energized and focused. To do so first requires some idea of who your students are and what they'll need. Time of day is a large factor - is it first thing in the morning or are your students coming off of a long day?

Stage combat classes often exist in a time and space outside of the rest of students' lives. Our expectations are different than that of other classrooms, and much of the work we do walks a narrow path of what is deemed appropriate-seeming behavior. It's important to structure our lessons in such a way that denotes this shift from their daily routines. Ritual can be a great tool here - I like the traditional starting together in a circle - warm ups, opening sequences, or check-ins are also effective. Whatever you decide doesn't need to be something long and drawn out, just a quick way to efficiently reaffirm our purpose together and to help your students get into the proper mindset.

Also think about how you want to wrap up class, to make sure that students are solid on what they've learned, emotionally/physically intact, and are ready to re-enter the real world as non-combative citizens. Many of the fight classes I've taken do this very successfully, incorporating techniques like saluting together to seal the practice, or thanking our partners. Once after a more emotionally charged session, we took a moment to shake out the tension, and then rub our hands together and extend them to the middle of the circle as a way of coming together in a small but intentional way. Moments like these help us all to leave the room prepared to go on with our day, and are extremely important for students' wellbeing.

Extensions to the Real World

Young people are still making sense of the world around them (as opposed to us adults, who have such a *keen* understanding of everything going on around us). Help them fit stage combat into the larger

framework of what they know about the world. Talk about the body's reactions to fighting, talk about technology, talk about how this applies to the superhero franchise movies they're undoubtedly watching at home. Talk about your own work - they've probably never met an actor combatant, or a fight director before. Demonstrate to them how what you do is a profession, a time-honored craft that takes years of study and practice. Providing context for the work we're doing allows for a richer experience for newer students.

Sometimes this can also lead to deeper conversations. Once while workshopping fight scenes with a class of sixth graders, we were giving feedback as a group about what was effective and what should change. A girl raised her hand after watching her peers' fight, and said she wanted to change the "boyfriend" hitting his "girlfriend." To make sure I understood, I asked if she meant the angle or the timing needed to change on the hit. She clarified she didn't want the male character to be hitting the female one *at all*, that it was against the law to hit women. As her teacher, I felt obligated to point out it's actually against the law to hit anyone, but it led to a really great discussion about why it made us as an audience uncomfortable to watch this scene. While everyone in the class could rattle off the golden rule of how to treat others, dissecting a fight scene happening in front of us made space for a richer conversation about how violence operates in our own community.

Tools for Classroom Management

Because fight work requires a high level of focus and discipline, I find that stage combat classes are some of the smoothest running classes. Generally, young people understand that studying stage combat is a privilege - most adults would never trust them with even pretending



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to be violent – and so they rise to the occasion. Not always to be sure; sometimes it's not the right time for a student. But as the teacher, we generally have the ability to control way the class goes. Here are a few tools I've found help keep class flowing smoothly:

Use Attention getters – Having a phrase that signals a pause in the work will save your voice and valuable teaching time. Call and response phrases are particularly effective because they're active, rather than passive: students physically and vocally do something to show you they are listening. "Hold, please!" and "Hold" is a practice we make good use of in stage combat.

Establish clean guidelines for how information will be disseminated – Do you want everyone to just watch the first time, or do you want them to try it with you? Make this clear, so that you don't have to waste time stopping students from going off and doing their own interpretation. What looks like goofing around may very well be students eager to practice the moves and gain your praise.

Asking students to repeat what you've said back to you – This is a great way to check for understanding. It also keeps students active in their listening, and forces them to take ownership of the knowledge.

Focus – young people typically have about a two to four minute capacity for sitting and listening before they get antsy, or their minds start to wander. Structure lessons into smaller chunks so that students are on their feet quicker. If you set a brisker pace, then the students will have to work to keep up with you, and will stay focused.

Modify the Combination

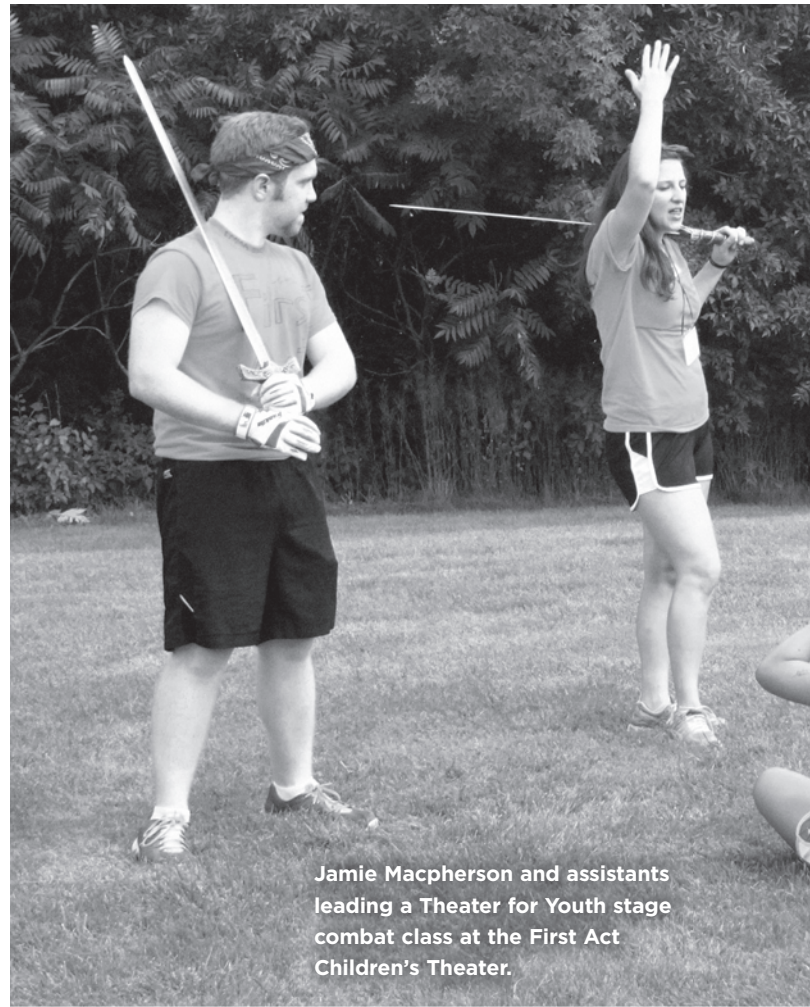
Make use of beats, slow motion, out-of-distance, etc. These techniques help students gain familiarity with the moves in a safe way before they work with their partners. As much as possible, find different ways to let students do the movements, to put them into their bodies. When you change up the approach or the mode in which you're guiding them through the movements, it causes them to think about the moves in a different way, effectively helping them to train with intention. Beats help parcel out the moves, moving in slow motion helps with fluidity and leads to new discoveries. I'm a big fan of fighting as though we're stuck in Jello, as it forces students to slow down while still maintaining the same level of intensity and intention in the movements. And depending on the ability level of students, pool noodles or "Jedi moves" that don't require physical contact may make for a safer, more effective lesson.

Side Coaching

Just as it sounds, side coaching is talking to students while standing on the sidelines, prompting them without stopping the activity they're currently engaging in. This is a very useful tool, and when done well, it can take a class to the next level. A few things to be in mind of:

Call attention to what you want students to be doing, rather than what you don't want – "I see lots of good eye contact"; "Some of you are really taking your time to fully actualize the movements, that looks great!" Students want to be the recipient of your praise. Many will self-adjust accordingly.

Positivity – praise and encouragement go a long way. As a student I respond better when someone says "you're doing so well, now add ____ to take it to the next level." Or perhaps, "I know this section is tough for you, but trust your body." Many young people are still learning how to process feedback, their abilities are still tied to their sense of self, so things can also be taken more personally. You don't always need to give "warm fuzzies" but if students doubt themselves, they're going to get in their heads or begin to doubt their partners, both of which we know as fighters is neither safe nor productive.



Jamie Macpherson and assistants leading a Theater for Youth stage combat class at the First Act Children's Theater.

Leave space – Make use of a few choice phrases, and then give space for your students to work on what you're asking for. Your voice will thank you, and you'll create an environment of intentional practice, rather than establishing a need to get it right on the first try. If you're constantly swooping in, students will get nervous. They'll see you as a presence that serves to tell them what they're doing wrong. Their eyes will track to you, rather than their partners because they'll be seeking your feedback over being focused on their partner.

Remember: This Is Supposed To Be Fun!

Our primary goal should be to impart to students some of the same joy and appreciation for stage combat that we have. To be more specific: it's true that young actors need to have a sense of the risk involved, but not so much so that they're terrified to try it out, or bored by being lectured at. We can set them up for success by finding three to five moves that are challenging enough to be interesting, but still achievable so students walk away feeling like they've accomplished something. Sometimes that will mean adjusting your lesson once you've met your students, and not getting as far as you wanted. That's okay. A few months ago, I taught a class where we weren't able to get as far as I would have liked with a combination. I packed up feeling a bit disappointed, but when I came out to the lobby, I was greeted by all of the children in the process of demonstrating to their parents the three moves we had been able to learn. They were falling to the floor in mock defeat, rolling around laughing, proudly showing their parents the new skills they had just learned. It was a good reminder for me about keeping things in perspective.

If students leave with an understanding of what stage combat is



(story-telling, an illusion, not actually combat moves), and feeling like they can execute a few moves safely and with confidence, then we've done our job. We are not responsible for teaching them everything about stage combat, which should feel liberating. We give them a taste, a sample of what they could learn should they choose to pursue this art form, and let them seek out further opportunities for study. Stage combat is a particular language, and it can be tempting for both teacher and student to want to expand outward, learning as many new words as they can to be able to communicate. However, we need structure as learners to narrow in and help us focus. Having a few new moves that can be framed in different ways will go a long ways.

A Word on Power Dynamics

It's important to always remember that you're the adult in the room, and be mindful of what power that carries. I learned this lesson when I was a teaching assistant, partnering with a young actor working on slaps. I had known her for a week at this specific summer camp; we'd played games together and joked around. I knew her name, and she knew mine. When I swung up my hand to cue her however, I saw her eyes go wide with fear, and she crumpled up in a protective ball on the floor. In that moment, our prior relationship went out the window. I was suddenly an adult towering over her in a threatening manner.

Now, I could read all sorts of things into that moment: what was her home life like? Was there a history of violence in her family? Had she experienced bullying? But as her teacher, it's not my business to know, nor is it necessary. What I do know is in that moment, we'd crossed a line, and she was no longer acting, but

reacting out of a very real place of fear. I instantly dropped out of role and comforted her. We left the room together and went on a walk. I learned that day that no matter what kind of friendly rapport I may have with my students, no matter that I'm only 5'2, I will always be an adult in their eyes. Adopting an angry demeanor even in-role can be upsetting.

However, as a counter-point example: since that incident, I adopted a different approach. I started having students attack me first. And this worked until one day at another school I where I was teaching. I was teaching a simple non-contact punch, and all the students refused to hit me during the demonstration. I could tell that it made them uncomfortable to attack an adult, even though we were acting, even though we were not making physical contact. Another factor at play here could very well have been my skin color – I was the only white person in the room. I was also a Minnesotan in their Phoenix inner-city elementary school – not a part of their community. I have no way of knowing for sure, but I think I'd be naïve not to at least assume these attributes didn't play factor in somehow. So in this instance, I simply switched roles, and pretended to punch the student. She reacted beautifully, and her classmates all laughed and clapped. Tension successfully diffused.

The point I want to make is that as teachers, we need to be able to read the room, and know how you fit into the framework of the space you're entering. In the SAFD community we talk a lot about how we don't need to know students' personal histories of trauma or violence, but that we need to be able to react in the moment. The same is true with young people; perhaps even more so when said students may not have the sufficient language or emotional development to

process or ask for what they need. We need to be ahead of the game, and anticipate what our students need. Our role as adults in power is not a neutral one.

The same is true for our race, class, and gender. These carry weight, and will read differently in different scenarios. On the one hand, I love how my feminine, short stature can serve as a role model for young girls who may be interested in stage combat; or at the very least, my presence offers them an opportunity to interrogate the roles they assumed are available for them. In other situations my gender works against me, such as in a classroom of middle school boys who are not comfortable in their changing bodies, and yet feel the pressure to present as hyper-masculine. The same could be said for when I work with students who are questioning their gender, or students who are in the early stages of being attracted to women, and are unsure of how to deal with new feelings with a young-looking female teacher in front of them.

In these cases, I am very mindful of gender expectations. I take on a coach-like role, intentionally de-sexualizing myself and being even more mindful of respecting the space around my students' bodies. Whereas I may do a lot of high-fives or a put hand on the shoulder of a younger student, who may be in need of more concrete modes of feedback, I keep my praise verbal for older students, and am careful with eye-contact. Yes, I need to be direct, and want to establish a connection, but it may also make older students uncomfortable, as eye contact with adults is riskier for them.

End on a High Note

The tone of the class is important. Beginning students, particularly younger ones who are less confident in their capabilities need to constantly be reminded they are on the right track. Young people

experience so much pressure to do well – grades in school, their parents' expectations, getting into college. They have peers judging them, teachers grading them, and the voice in their own head doubting their every move. Young people have no problem with beating themselves up and telling themselves they're not good enough. If you want them to come back, you need to remind them of how well they've done, and how capable they are. They might not be able to contextualize the work they've done, or the extent to which they've mastered a specific move. For example, I had two young actors learn a fight in under an hour, which they would be performing later that night. I was extremely proud of them, but all they were focused on was that they must be weak and out of shape. They saw the mistakes, the hiccups, rather than how they had stayed calm and present and kept each other safe as they worked to get back on track. It's my job as the teacher to help them see what they accomplished.



As a colleague of mine once reflected, “When I do stage combat, I feel awesome. Who doesn’t want to feel awesome?” We all do, children and seasoned Equity actors alike. We all deserve to feel awesome, both as the superheroes we play, and as the masters of illusion that we as stage combat artists are. Just as the experiences in our childhood helped shape the path that led each of us to pursue stage combat, we owe it to the next generation to be the teachers and mentors we would have wanted along the way. All students deserve to be treated with care, to be challenged as learners, and to be recognized as individuals committed to mastering a skill. It’s just that for young people the approach has to be different, with expectations and methods specifically tailored for their bodies and their stages of development. 

The Pen is Mightier...

Use this space to draft your choreography, take notes, or start your own contribution!

Letter to the Editor

To the Fight Community:

Every time a new person in Hollywood, or Washington, or Anywhere, U.S.A., is revealed to have been using his power, gender, money, size, age, *privilege* to predate on another human being, I find myself thinking of Alicia Rodis's article in the *Fight Master*. She wrote about IDI's incredibly important work in intimacy direction, and the work we all do in the SAFD to create art that is fundamentally physical, shared, and (potentially) dangerous. I've had so many conversations with fighters, theatre creators, and teachers about how important consent is to the work we do—both as we're creating choreography to be put on another person's body, and as we're rehearsing and performing it.

In response to all of it, I wrote something.

I call it "a thought poem" because as I wrote it, I truly felt as if there was a stream straight from my brain to the page (iPhone) and I wanted nothing more than to share those thoughts,

in this format, with this community. Please consider this a THANKYOU to all of you who create spaces that are safe, consensual, and openly communicative in a time when we're finding out how many spaces are anything but.

Cristina Ramos

On Combat and Consent A Thought Poem

My bed may not be a stage
And this "act" is no rehearsal
But believe that when I say Stop
I mean Hold

When I say Stop, I mean Hold
Like Stage-Manager-Staring-You-Down Hold
Like This-Word-is-Sacred (HOLD!)
Like everyone within earshot
(to the electricians chatting about lunch options)
Stops what they're doing to

Pause
Listen
Breathe

And as long as everything looks safe you say

Is Everyone Okay?

Can we keep going?

And they say Yeah

And you make eye contact
And the scene goes on
But this time a little slower
A little more carefully

Just
In
Case

When I say Stop I mean Hold
Like Actor Combatant Hold
Like Remote-Control Pause-the-Action (HOLD!)
Like everything in the room
(to the dust hanging in the air)
Freezes Immediately

And you look at your partner
And they look at you
And as long as everything looks safe you say

Are You Okay?

Can We Start Where We Left Off?

And they say Yeah
And you make eye contact
And the scene goes on
But this time a little slower
A little more carefully

Just
In
Case

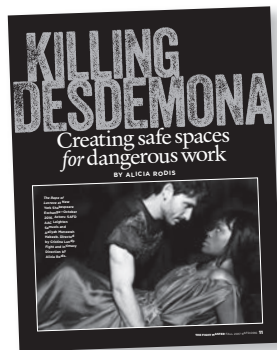
Because we know we have weapons
(We Are Weapons)
And safety should be a concern
(Safety is The Concern)
So when I say Stop

(When Anyone says Stop)
(Ever)
(At all)
(Anywhere)

It means
Stop
Freeze
Pause
Listen
Breathe

(You may be able to start again, but first—)

Hold.





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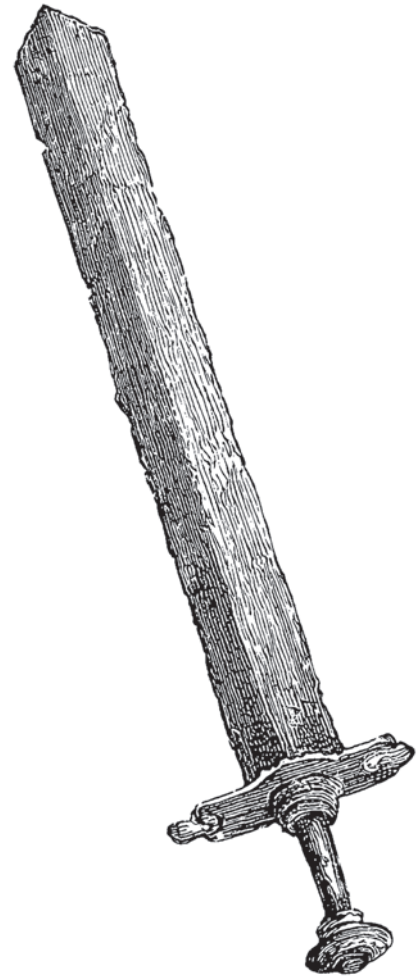
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Source: Centre de Minité



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

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

The SAFD Recognized Membership Levels

Friend

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

Certified Teacher

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

Actor Combatant

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

Fight Director

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

Advanced Actor Combatant

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

Fight Master

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

33% savings
for new
members!

Join or Renew Your Membership Today!

How much does it cost?

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

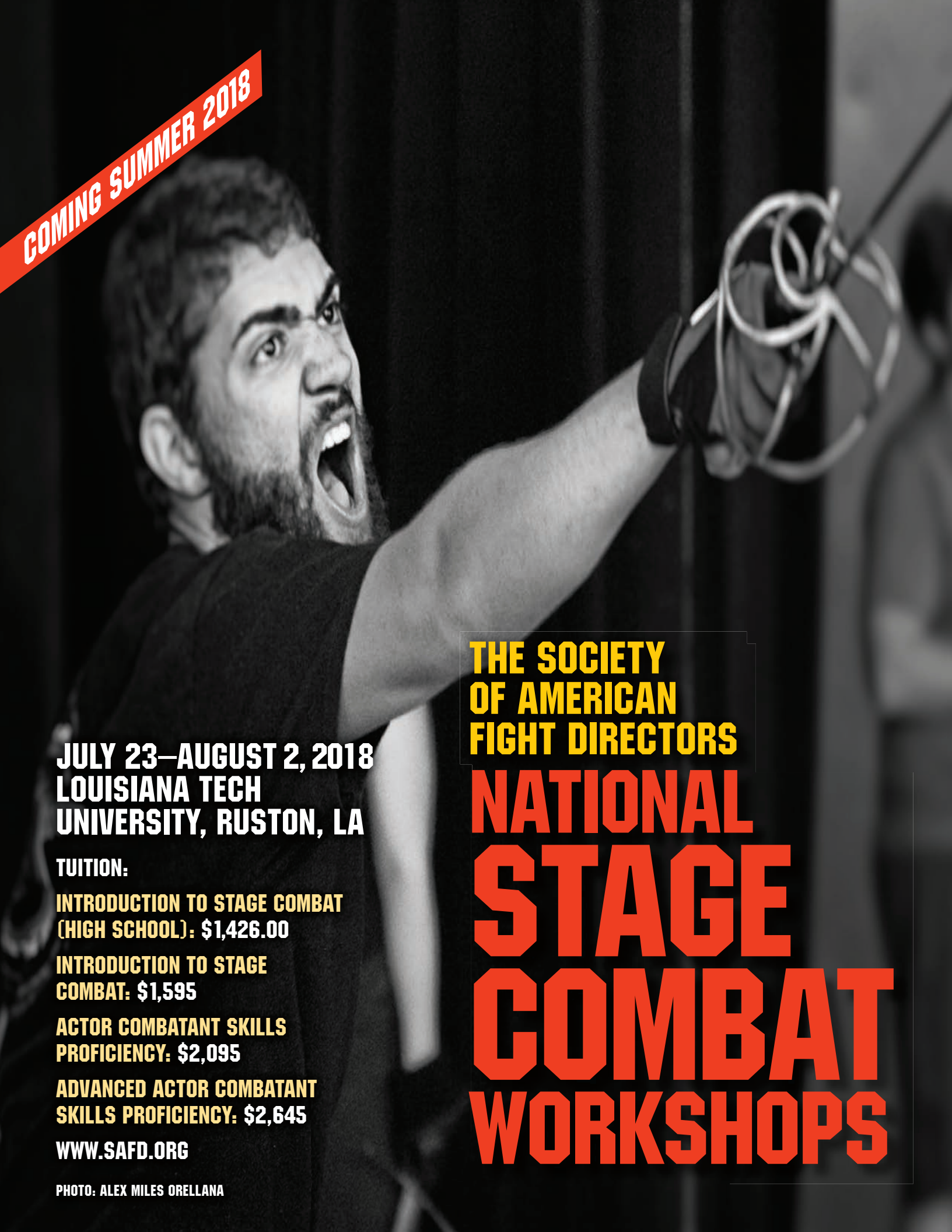
If you are a current or previous member of the SAFD, renewing costs as little as \$45.00 per year.

Ready to join or renew?

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

Thank you for supporting The Society of American Fight Directors.





COMING SUMMER 2018

JULY 23—AUGUST 2, 2018
LOUISIANA TECH
UNIVERSITY, RUSTON, LA

TUITION:

INTRODUCTION TO STAGE COMBAT
(HIGH SCHOOL): \$1,426.00

INTRODUCTION TO STAGE
COMBAT: \$1,595

ACTOR COMBATANT SKILLS
PROFICIENCY: \$2,095

ADVANCED ACTOR COMBATANT
SKILLS PROFICIENCY: \$2,645

WWW.SAFD.ORG

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THE SOCIETY
OF AMERICAN
FIGHT DIRECTORS

NATIONAL
STAGE
COMBAT
WORKSHOPS