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The Society of American Fight Directors

Winter 1990

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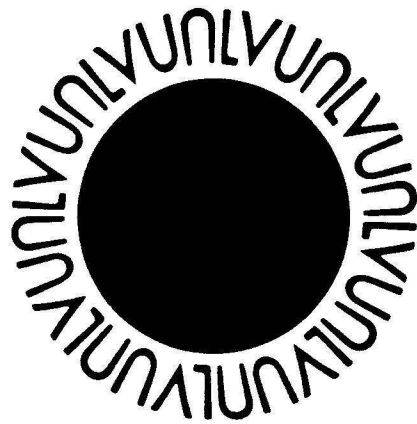
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THE FIGHT MASTER

**WINTER 1990
VOLUME XIII NUMBER 1**



**DEPARTMENT OF THEATRE ARTS
COLLEGE OF FINE AND PERFORMING ARTS
UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA, LAS VEGAS**

THE FIGHT MASTER

Journal of the Society of American Fight Directors

Editor	Linda Carlyle McCollum
Associate Editor	Olga Lyles
Assistant Editor	Todd Tjaden
Book Review Editor	Dale Anthony Girard
Layout Editor	Denise Stephenson

The Fight Master is published three times a year in January, May and September at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas for the Society of American Fight Directors. Editorial correspondence should be addressed to Linda McCollum, **The Fight Master**, Department of Theatre Arts, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, 89154-5044. The journal invites articles, notes, production reviews, bibliographical, and other information which furthers the aesthetics and appreciation of stage combat in the entertainment industry. Articles may be of a historical nature, analytical, interpretive, technical or personal experience as long as the subject relates to stage combat. Manuscripts should be typed and double-spaced. Articles for consideration are accepted at anytime. Articles for consideration in specific issues have the following deadlines: November 15th for the January (Winter) issue, March 15th for the May (Spring) issues and July 15th for the September (Fall) issue.

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THE FIGHT MASTER

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PRESIDENT'S COLUMN

I have grabbed the falling scepter and am running like hell! I am very pleased and honored to have been elected President of the Society of American Fight Directors for the next three years. I hope that I can live up to our past Presidents, Mssrs. Boushey, Fredricksen and Martinez, who forged this group from the ground up. The Society is twelve years young, still finding its place in the world, and is populated with very exciting and talented people, you! While the Officers of the Society are slugging it out in the trenches, remember, we represent you, and, if you aren't involved, we can only do so much.

I am very happy to announce several new programs for the Society in the 1990's. First, we have established Regional Representatives. These are individuals who are uniquely qualified to serve as focus points for the good of the Society in their particular geographical regions. The United States is too big of a country for the nine Fight Masters to do all the work. The Regional Representatives will be covering specific cities and states by holding meetings, contacting local members, holding classes, attending Union meetings, and doing any other work directed at fostering interest in the Society of American Fight Directors. Congratulations to you!

Secondly, in July 1990, at the summer workshop at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, we will begin a new training program. The Advanced Actor Combatant Workshop is designed for performers to study more advanced fight technique with the Master Teachers. It fills the gap between the Basic Workshop and the Advanced Teacher Training Workshop (now scheduled for the summer of 1993), and will soon be a pre-requisite for application for Certified Teacher training. This program will be headed by myself and Master Fredricksen, and we are very excited by it.

Thirdly, this month initiates a Society newsletter published by Mr. Raether and his wife Margaret. This regular update will be sent to members to help keep in touch between issues of The Fight Master. Congratulations in advance to them. Please send them ideas and articles, cartoons, and bits of human interest.

Fourthly, we are putting in place a new Chairman of the Board of Directors, Dr. Jeffrey Koep, Chair of the Department of Theatre Arts at UNLV. Dr. Koep is very energetic, well connected, unbiased, and sees the Society for what it can do for the industry and education. We welcome him aboard with the beating of drums and the flashing of sabres.

Lastly, we have simplified the schedule for the National Workshop. With the advent of the Advanced Workshop, the National Workshop can now concentrate on the beginning and intermediate students and need not try to be all things to all people. The schedule will be more intensely focused on the mainstream techniques of Rapier and Dagger, Unarmed and Broadsword, with only introductory classes in Smallsword and Quarterstaff.

Finally, let me say that I plan to visit many cities around the country these next three years to meet with as many of you as I can. I also plan to begin a Grant process for the Society, something I'm already working on. Needless to say, I couldn't do this without the help of my other Officers, Mr. Drew Fracher and Mr. Richard Raether, both very capable and dedicated to the Society.

I look forward to the next three years and to the chance to "make a difference." To the nay-sayers, and grumblers, I say, "Here We Come!"

J. ALLEN SUDDETH

ETHICS AND FIGHT DIRECTION

by JOHN J. FLYNN

*Lear: There's an animal in a cage. I must let it out or the earth will be destroyed. There'll be great fires and the water will dry up. All the people will be burned and the wind will blow their ashes into huge columns of dust and they'll go round and round the earth forever! We must let it out! (Calls, bangs on wall)) Here! Pull your chain! Here! Break it!*¹

We live in a world that would have been unimaginable to our ancestors only two or three generations past, a world that operates at such an accelerated pace that it is almost unrecognizable from one moment to the next. Socially, technologically, ethically we are always moving to new ground. The whiplash pace society is keeping puts those of us in politically charged disciplines on constantly shifting ground both morally and aesthetically. In fight choreography (and the portrayal of violence generally) there are several familiar signposts: the motion picture industry's ratings review system, standards and practices in television, governmental attacks on comic books and film, hearings on violence and television that continue to this day, parents' groups, and the frightening appearance of mass murders at regular intervals—people who carry out on the playground or at the office the slaughter that we are called upon to devise for public entertainment. What is our responsibility? Are we somehow culpable in the crimes, both large and small, that are committed in imitation of stage and screen?

The answer to that question is: in some sense, yes. The overwhelming evidence suggests that watching violence incites violence, and that “catharsis” in the old sense of the word (the one our high school teachers used to peddle—the purgation of aggressive emotions) simply doesn't exist.² We are in a position similar to the one that physicists have found themselves in since the Manhattan Project: can we live with ourselves if we help to build the bomb? Edward Bond's quote at the top of this piece is as applicable to Oppenheimer or Einstein as it is to you or me, for we have built the cage, and we have placed the animal in it.

It was during my own work as a fight director on Bond's *Lear* at Santa Cruz several years ago that I began to puzzle over these issues. ‘The play is, for those of you unfamiliar with it, a relentlessly violent piece (Bond's greatest fame comes from the scene in his *Saved* in which a group of disaffected youths smear an infant with feces and stone it to death in its carriage), and yet his work attempts to combat and prevent violence. I think that it accomplishes this, and that it points towards a consideration which we all must make in our own work.

Now the Victorians made sex pornographic, which meant that they could use it for political ends. Sex became not a natural function, but something to use. Now, the whole of our society is bent on glamorizing—and using--violence. If you turn on your television set you see a program about somebody killing someone else, and Mrs. Whitehouse says, how dreadful, it shouldn't have been made. but then the ads come on, and there is a government commercial for killers...be taught how to use a sten gun—be a man.³

Violent behavior is and always has been with us, but we must ask ourselves how we use it, in the sense that Bond speaks of in this quotation. There is much that we, as fight choreographers, cannot control (the composition of meaning is, after all, the province of the director, the dramaturge, and the playwright), but there are subtle and effective ways in which we can counter the glamorization and “use” of violence.

I would like to propose three poles, three different general aesthetic categories which we might use to talk about the portrayal of violence. They are by no means separate and distinct, but they may give us some way of viewing and judging the moral and ethical impact of our work. I shall call them Staged Violence, High Style Violence, and Real Time Violence.

The first is by far the most prevalent in the western theatre. Staged violence is the objective of most modern fight choreographers; it is polished, mechanical, and immoral by virtue of its amorality. This is the aesthetic that glamorizes and uses violence: it makes it “pornographic” in Bond’s sense. Its *raison d’être* is innocent enough. Two things must be done by any fight choreographer: he or she must make the fight safe for the actors, and he or she must provide a small, linear narrative out of an activity that is usually chaotic. This is demonstrated in what is a fundamental sequence for the actor-combatant in the technique of many fight choreographers, a sequence which includes four steps:

1. Make eye contact with fellow actor (As if to say “Are you ready?”).
2. Show audience and actor what you are going to do and where your weapon or limb will go.
3. Perform the action.
4. Show the result.

This is the basic unit of many fights—the actual breakdown may differ, but the spirit of this compositional technique is universal. A number of these sequences compose a “Phrase” of the fight, and a number of phrases in turn compose the entire fight. The use of musical references is no mistake: Staged Violence is a very musical/mathematical thing. It allows a comprehension of the event that is “culinary” or “Aristotelian,” to use Brechtian terminology: we are lead through the act. It discourages contemplation of the physical effects of violence (i.e. death, disfigurement, gore), and emphasizes instead the action that brings it about. It is presented as the very soul of logic, and it is therefore essentially at odds with the thing it represents.

High-Style Violence shares many characteristics with Staged Violence, but it differs in that its central conceit is that no one is actually harmed. Perhaps the best examples of this are Peking Opera or broad slapstick, both of which are so removed from actual action that they approach dance. In Peking Opera, no attempt is made to actually strike an opponent: opponents meet each other’s weapons. A fight sequence in Peking Opera is a display of incredible acrobatic precision. It is so fantastical and so far removed from actual violence that it occupies a grey area in terms of what it says about violence. It is clearly preferable, in a moral and political sense, to the insidious conceits of Staged Violence, but it still offers problems in the sense that it is only a step away from Staged Violence.

Real-Time Violence could also be called Bondian violence or Naturalistic Violence (although only the first term is relatively free of intellectual baggage). Stage time, story-telling time, is disposed of: things simply happen. There is no mask of logic, no chance to savor the experience. The choreographer of Real-Time Violence takes a step beyond the realm of Staged Violence. Such a choreographer constructs the well-oiled machine that the creator of Staged Violence does (in order to protect the actors) and then turns the clean logic of that fight back towards the chaos that it represents.

An example of this is found clearly in Bond’s **Lear** in the sequence about the destruction of the Gravedigger’s Boy’s House, which features what amounts to a raid on civilians by an army death squad. The sequence of action here is so relentless and unforgiving that one would have a hard time seeing it as an exhilarating scene. A boy is shot, his wife is raped, their pigs are killed (senselessly, an important detail), an old man is dumped down a well—the actions follow each other in a cold and precise manner and we are not given time to understand any of them.

They are ticked off like items on a madman's clipboard. Things happen too fast for us to assign the meaning that we would like to them; too fast for us to assign any meaning to them at all.

In most film or stage violence we are lead through the act as if it were a sexual one—we can luxuriate in the way the violence unfolds, we can see the climax coming, and, when the coup de grace is delivered, we are obviously expected to enjoy it as we would un petit mort. Anyone who has ever been in a street fight, or been mugged, or been in a war can tell you that it never happens that way. The only time that we are able to ponder an act of violence in this central sequence of **Lear** is the boy's death, and Bond makes the image such a stark one that there is only one possible reaction to it.

What I am asking for is an evolution of the fight choreographer, from a creature of technique to a creature of technique and ethics. Once again, the situation finds a direct parallel in the development of many nuclear physicists (and, indeed, science in general provides many parallels), physicists who professed a great fascination with the development of atomic weapons while working on the Manhattan Project at Los Alamos. The technical challenge and the beauty of the mysteries of matter and energy were irresistible to these people, many of whom now form the backbone of anti-nuclear organizations world-wide. We must mature beyond the technical as well, or we perish.

It is the manner of violence that Bond's plays suggest that I carry around with me most strongly, and I intend to use it as a yardstick for my own use of violence as a director and a fight choreographer. I can't help but wish that the entire question would be taken more seriously, because it is a central question in society today; unfortunately it is rarely isolated (in the sense that a terrible amount of irresponsibility concerning violence and its presentation in theatre, film and television today, and it doesn't seem to be getting any better. The truly unfortunate thing is that irresponsibility seems to spring from a faithful execution of the director's (and the fight choreographer's) primary responsibility, that being the telling of a compelling story. The great majority of theatreworkers in America have been hung on Freytag's pyramid; they seek to tell a good story, and they feel the need to insert a good "bang" at the end of the story. This is part of our theatrical heritage, and it has taken on a life all its own. There is a frightening implosion happening to "theatre's double," a realization of the terrible remorselessness that we see in the stoning of the child in Bond's **Saved**. Such scenes are no longer alien to our streets, our news sources, or our entertainment. In the street gangs of thirty years ago, murder was viewed as a perversion. A young murderer was a "psycho," a nut case. In Los Angeles, we talk about the number of gang murders per day. The perverse portrayal of violence has become such a commonplace in our world that it is moving out of the realm of the pseudo-sexual and into the realm of the casual. We have invited it in, and it is here to stay.

Finding the balance, the way to "de-glamorize" violence, is the trick here, and for that I have no simple breakdowns or formulas. I can only offer a framework, a way for looking at fight choreography. There is no simple answer, because it is as complex as the next play that you are going to work on. We are all engaged in a task that carries the same contradictions that soldiering does: to keep the peace we ready ourselves for war. Step outside of your technique for a moment, out of the pleasure of crisp execution, and ask what this is saying and where it is going. if you want to remain a technician, fine. Good luck to you, but stay out of my theatre. If you're an artist, if you're willing to clear up some of the garbage that has been dumped on the public in the name of entertainment or art, stick with it—you'll be fighting the good fight.

¹ Edward Bond. **Bond Plays: Two** (London: Eyre Methuen, 1978) from *Lear*, II,ii., p. 51.

² For an excellent discussion of this see "The Facilitation of Aggression by Aggression: Evidence against the Catharsis Hypothesis" in Elliot Aronson's **Readings About the Social Animal** (San Francisco: W. H. Freeman and Company, 1981) pp. 226-236. To restate the findings simply: "Subjects who had been attacked...delivered shocks of greater intensity."

³ Roger Hudson, Catherine Itzin, and Simon Trussler, "Drama and the Dialectics of Violence" (*Theatre Quarterly* 2: January-March 1972), p. 8.

John Flynn is a director and fight choreographer who is completing his doctorate in Asian Theatre at UCLA. A version of this paper was presented at the Themes in Drama Conference on Violence in 1989.

 **En garde!** 

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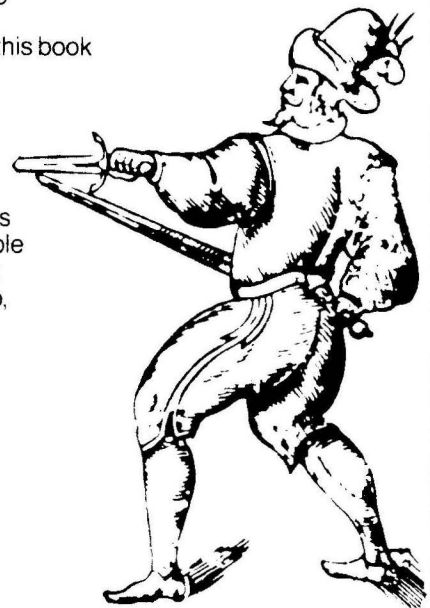
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APACHE: THE ORIGINAL DANGEROUS GAME

by Colleen Kelly

"In a room that smells of smoke and sweat, a man dressed in a brown shirt, black pants and leather boots drags a woman along the floor by her hair. In another part of the room, a man in a black hat pulled low over his eyes thrusts his knees between a woman's legs, forcing her back to arch and her bare arms to flare out. Against the far wall, a group of unshaven men in high boots finger the knots in their neckerchiefs and watch through half-closed eyes. Across the floor, a young couple lean into each other's bodies as they pass a cigarette back and forth" (Stasio 5).

Similar pantomimes in the form of a dance called "Apache" have pleased audiences from Europe to the Americas since the nineteenth century. However, the above scenario was not witnessed in the cafes of Montmartre at the turn of the century, but rather observed by Marilyn Stasio, a **New York Times** reporter, during a rehearsal for the recent Broadway production of **Dangerous Games** conceived and directed by Graziela Daniele, and it pleased neither audiences nor critics. The first act, "Tango," includes knife fights (choreographed by B.H. Barry) and a stylized rape—which, according to the director, makes a statement about the "eroticism of violence between the sexes." Pre-Broadway runs brought instant hostile response reminiscent of **The Robber Bridegroom** and **The Fantastiks**: San Francisco audience members hurled programs at the performers and women in Philadelphia accused the director of sexism. Ms. Daniele responded that she wanted to put her nails into something more meaningful: "I am tired of doing entertainment. I want to show that dance is more than esthetic voyeurism" (Stasio 25). What she offered was erotic voyeurism and according to reviewer Frank Rich of the **New York Times**, "Ms. Daniele's game, more insidious than dangerous, is to give theatergoers a little titillation and then hector them for surrendering to such base instincts" (Rich C3) .

The ability of an audience to respond, and the nature of that response, is as much a statement about culture as the content of the entertainment being presented. The acceptance of the Apache dance throughout its history is found in its various shrouds: it successfully smuggled erotic violence in an aesthetic presentation and in so doing, escaped contemporary rating. Even the tango which originated in Ms. Daniele's own Argentina was not, in all its aesthetic beauty, nurtured as a national folk dance, but rather condemned as "the reptile from the brothel," eventually finding a home among the Parisians (Borges 1). I am not suggesting that Ms. Daniele should have masked the nature of sexual violence, I do, however, feel that she made a nineteenth-century assumption about her twentieth-century audience.

During the Victorian period, voyeurism was at its private peak. The audience, predominantly male, understood their role in live entertainment: to watch. One could participate in the aesthetic or the erotic. The Victorian male, a connoisseur of erotic literature, could capably fill in the erotic blanks in the visual scenario. Either beauty or titillation could be found in the eye of the beholder. Consequently, this silent participation through the eye offered perfect impunity (Davis 314). Since its earliest presentation during the late nineteenth century, both the Apache dance and its audience have experienced an evolution. Ms. Daniele succeeded in returning the presentation of the Apache dance to its primitive beginnings. She was not, however, able to retard the audience nor counter twentieth-century perceptions.

Although neither the history nor the name of the Apache dance may be familiar to a contemporary audience certainly the visual form of the dance is recognizable. Even children have had the opportunity of seeing Bugs Bunny and Elmer Fudd perform to the Apache "theme": Offenbach's **Valse Chaloupée**. The dance of the Apache originated in the cafes of the Montmartre district in Paris during the 1890's. Apache gangs were composed of notorious criminals, and just as other classes of individuals who challenge authority and defy social/moral codes (cowboys, pirates, flower children, punkers), the Apache were envied, romanticized, and imitated (Hagen N. page). Their passionate dance-mime become a popular curiosity. It was their story; it was the living history of this subculture...or at least it was being sold as such, for in order for the dance to be appropriated and presented as an entertainment in public-Paris, artistic justification was needed. Nudity, for example, was considered art when it was presented in imitation of Greek Statues (movement was not permitted). So too was the brutality of the Apache dance elevated to art: Maurice Mouvet, an early imitator of the dance, justified it this way: "It is, I suppose, an intensely brutal dance, but it is not vulgar with deliberate vulgarity. It is the dance of realism, a primitive passion"(Mouvet 35). In its earliest form the "dance" was likely nothing more than a semi planned confrontation between pimp and prostitute, a side-show to attract clients; but the "primitive passion" of the Apache was nothing less than the terror of Paris, and if one can tell the character of a person by the type of weapon he carries, then a glance at the apache pistol should be sufficient introduction.*

A Paris reporter covered one of the many street brawls that occurred between the criminal gangs and likened the "fury of a riotous incident between two men and a woman to the ferocity of savage Apache Indians in battle" (Dannett 59). The Apache (pronounced a-pash') adopted the name with pride, and vied for "top billing" publicity, not unlike the characters in Bob Fosse's adaptation of **Chicago**. The female Apache's picture could be found on Paris postcards and her story followed in the tabloids and newspapers. Curtis Brown immortalized Chiffonette, "la reine de la Courtille," in a 1909 news article:

Chiffonette is a tall brawny lass of 23 summers and the equal of any male Apache in cunning and ferocious courage. She would be handsome were it not for the fact that she has lost an eye. She is tattooed like a red Indian and shows with pardonable pride the scars of half a hundred wounds received in fights with knife or revolver. She already has 11 convictions to her credit, and is feared and envied as being absolutely reckless. She took atrocious revenge on her first sweetheart because he dared to deceive her. The wretched man, attacked in his sleep, was reduced by Chiffonette to such pitiable state that he had to spend six months in a hospital. When he came out again he asked Chiffonette to marry him, vowing that if she refused he would shoot her. Chiffonette pretended to acquiesce, took the necessary steps for the banns to be published and then, two days before the wedding, laughed in her sweethearts face and told him she only was fooling him. The Apache whipped out his revolver and fired three shots. One of the bullets struck Chiffonette on the frontal bone, forcing the left eye out of its socket. It was then that the girl showed the stuff she was made of. Coolly replacing the blinded eye in its socket, she drew a long knife and plunged it in her assailant's body, striking again and again till he was dead. (Brown).

* The Apache pistol was a "three-in-one" weapon: it had a six chambered cylinder and fired a 7mm pinfire cartridge. The brass frame was fitted with a folding, sinuous blade, and the butt section was formed to serve as a knuckleduster. This type of weapon, popular in the late nineteenth century was known as an Apache pistol after the slang name given to violent French criminals. See F. Wilkinson. **Antique Pistols**. (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1985), p. 79.

Curtis Brown continues to reiterate the public recognition the female Apache had won for herself and describes a painting representing two young women, knife in hand and stripped to the waist, fighting a duel, while a couple of cynical Apaches looked on. The painting had excited much attention chiefly on account of its realism. It was what the Parisians call *d'actualite*—up to date (N. page). Possibly Chiffonette was the inspiration:

Springing forward in a trice she was face to face with Andrea, whose blood she had sworn to have. Amid shrieks and yells and imprecations the two girls rushed at each other while a crowd of 100 quickly gathered around. Closing with her antagonist, Chiffonette rolled her into the middle of the road, both fighting desperately. The friends of each combatant formed so dense a circle that it was a scrimmage rather than a duel. There was a last shriek and then a pause. Chiffonette and three other girls, rose and drew back, leaving on the ground the corpse of Andrea, whose heart had been pierced by a stiletto driven deep between the shoulders (N. page.).

An enterprising variety manager secured the services of *Casque d'Or*, a contemporary of Chiffonette, but audiences and authorities would not tolerate such a scandal (Brown N. page.). Representation was acceptable, presentation was not. Thus ended the stage career of the first female Apache. Her performance would remain a local exhibition to be immortalized through imitators. Two such gentlemen were Max Dearly, a well-known dancer at the Moulin Rouge, and Maurice Mouvet, who eventually introduced the Apache dance to America. One evening the two gentlemen, hoping to catch a glimpse of the Apache dance, ventured into the *Caveau des Innocents* and witnessed an Apache tough grab one of the girls. In his memoirs, Maurice describes the event:

Shed did not seem willing to dance, but with a simple persuasion he raised one of his hands and gave her a smart smack across the mouth. She did not seem to resent it. Thoroughly cowed, she submitted to be taken into the middle of the floor, and the peculiarly vicious and savage dance commenced. As it proceeded she seemed to warm to her task and threw all the primitive savage grace which some of these women possess into the dance. When it came to its spectacular conclusion with the girl swinging far from the floor, her thin arms clasped tightly about the neck of her partner, with sudden violence he unloosed her hold and pushed her none too gently onto the floor near his table. Then he returned, picked up his poker hand, and continued the game as if there had been no interruption (Mouvet 28).

In preparation for their London engagement, M. Elexis and his dancing partner Mlle. Isolde, claimed to have spent a year in the Paris underworld to enable them to portray the correct atmosphere, gesture and general effect of the Apache dance. "Joe" Smith, the original Barbary Coaster, who, along with several other variety performers, claims to have brought the Apache dance to America (along with the fiendish "Vampire Dance"), was careful to modify the dance so it "cannot displease any theater-goer," while aiming to "preserve the atmosphere of the dance" ("Joe'..." N. page.). It was in the *Cafe Rat Mort* district of Paris that he first saw the dance:

I noticed an Apache woman sit down at a table and wait for someone. Soon a man appeared. I knew he asked her for money and I saw her produce it from her stocking. The man called a waiter and ordered absinthe for both. The woman refused to drink with him. Evidently they were quarreling about another man. Suddenly he picked up her glass and threw it at her, breaking it over her head. Then he rushed at her, knocking her to the ground with a vicious punch. I thought she was dead, but she calmly arose and turned her face toward him with the sweetest expression imaginable, as if imploring him for a kiss (N. page).

The behavior of the Apache male in the above two scenarios certainly seems consistent with his reputation. The response, however, of the female appears to be out of character for the likes of, say, Chiffonette. It would be “in character,” though, for an enterprising woman who is “playing” to Victorian clientele. The dance consisted of postures and poses that, when recreated for the stage, had a Delsartean look. In its original form, however, these poses more likely resembled the “32 postures, no more and no less” that could be viewed for a price at luxury brothels (Lewinsohn 347). The exposure of the female victim’s legs and thighs while falling and being lifted would be salacious enough for any voyeur worthy of his pastime, and certainly the drama, which included submissive behavior and willing participation in sadomasochism, could be found in erotic novel passages written by authors such as Sacher-Masoch, himself: “Maltreat me, so that I may endure my happiness, be cruel to me, give me kicks and kisses” (Lewinsohn 336). In *A History of Sexual Customs*, Lewinsohn observes that Sacher-Masoch’s sexual images “came from a world in which human relationships are a matter of ordering and obeying, a world ruled by police sabres and the knout, in which the victim of a thrashing respectfully kisses the hand which inflicts it” (337). Maurice Mouvet, a recreator of the Apache dance, recalls his partner feinting a challenging look in her eyes, as if she would assure him that, in spite of his terrific actions, she had not suffered greatly at his hands—just as in the eyes of the “little Parisian cocotte.” Looking at the real Apache, there comes that scared look of devotion, a conquered expression of frightened joy. Amelie Rives, in her novel *World’s End!*, describes the drama in explicit detail:

He held his partner to him by a hand spread flat between her shoulders—the gesture of a feline that has put his sheathed paw lightly on some object, yet means to hold it by its claws if necessary. The girl was of an exquisite vulgarity, no longer the pert little street-decoy of the fleshlings and revealing slip, but a tranced, piteous victim of sex, drawn to the devouring male like a seabird to the glare of the pharos that means its death. The dance begins. It is a dance of satiety on his part, of not-to-be-rebuffed, utterly debased pleading on hers. He is the carnivore whose lip-bristles are stiff with blood, who has eaten the sweet white meat till he wishes to rend and grind what he can no longer swallow. She is the blood that cries from the ground where it is spilt to be spilt again—the degraded flesh that does not feel itself alive until the fangs of the devourer are in it. Once, with a sudden spasm of pent rage, he cuffs her right and left on her whitened jaws, as the tiger cuffs his mate grown too familiar. He bends her backward, sideward, as though he would break her fragile bones and hear them grit together in the warm pulp of her flesh—then flings her from him like a little doll of rags. When she trembles up—crouches, fawns—he pounces: this time he has her up by the wrists. Up

she goes, up and up. He whirls her around his head like a living sling—a sling of flesh in which the heart is the stone to be slung forth (Mouvet 45-47).

Primary accounts of Apache dance brutality depict the male victimizing the female. Later recreations reversed these roles, and incorporated knives, revolvers, whips, even the addition of a second female character. As eroticism in entertainment became more common place, and “legitimate” variety artists were now no more than opening acts for cinemas, Apache dancers began playing down the sexual violence of the drama and focusing on special effects (breakaway chairs and tables) and acrobatic feats. One of the last Apache dance teams on the vaudeville circuit was Lafayette and Laverne. Along with grabbing her hair and hurling her, Lafayette also “kicked Laverne full in the face sending her across the entire floor.” But the review of this 1931 performance was heavily weighted in describing the acrobatic feats and the dynamic finish through the glass French doors, giving little attention to the brutal nature of the relationship being portrayed (Healy 25). By 1949, Apache dancer Charles Appleton required two female victims with the “gentler sex” mixing it up in a cat fight (“Mayhem...” 23). H.E. Cooper, writing for **The Dance** magazine, attributes the retrogression of the Apache dance to the plethora of “collarless and disreputable looking Apaches, who had once attended dancing school in Keokuk or Kalamazoo...theatrical cavemen manhandling costumed coquettes...their cigarette, stage dagger, and disdainful looks were inevitable and predictable (28). Another theory places liability on the cinema—John K. Newnham of **The Dancing Times** made a most timely observation in 1931:

Until recently, one always experienced a deep hush during hectic Apache dances. But, in this case, there were audible guffaws from all around me. Scenes which for many years have evoked gasps received chuckles. It was not the fault of the dancers. The fact is, so far as cinemas [live stage shows presented prior to the movie] are concerned, Apache dance is too artificial. It is supposed to be strong meat: but on the screen itself you can see meat which is infinitely stronger...Dances of this description have got to be swifter, dizzier, more dangerous looking than ever before if put on in cinemas. It must be remembered that films themselves can present amazing thrills which cannot possibly be emulated on the stage. And this ‘thrill’ dancing has got to be much better than mediocre or even moderately good if it is to bear comparison(530).

The audience’s fascination with dangerous feats—whether performed on stage, on screen, or on highwire—appears to move freely through social history. The nature, fashion, and quality of the spectacle is guided by popular culture and reflects the beau idéal. If the audience’s response to *Dangerous Games* can be used as a measure, it does not appear as if the Apache dance will rank as this society’s thrill-fugler. But the physical precariousness of the dance is only one aspect of its *raison d’être*. The base purpose of the dance’s danger was to arouse—it was sexual violence sanctioned by and presented within nineteenth-century social structure. Intrinsic to the dance-drama (in which both performer and audience knowingly participated) is the feinting of passivity: the female as social victim. Contemporary sexual language includes an articulated feminine consciousness which precludes nineteenth century male hegemony. Silence was, and is, participation and perpetuation. Ms. Daniele wanted to show that “Dance is also a language; it says things” (Stasio 25). It did. And the twentieth century audience replied.

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Colleen Kelly is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Drama at the University of Virginia where she heads the Movement Program and is a member of the Acting and Directing Faculty.

CHILDREN'S THEATRE COMPANY IN MINNEAPOLIS

by David Doersch

About a year and a half has passed since the end of my involvement with the Children's Theatre Company in Minneapolis. It was shortly before the SAFD workshop last summer in Memphis that I learned that I was cast in their original production of **Robin Hood**. The role that I was to play was Robert (the peasant that portrays Robin Hood in this play within a play). Well, needless to say, I went to Memphis full of hopes and excitement at my good fortune. I wondered who the choreographer would be...I wondered if the Children's Theatre was looking for any company members..I wondered what the script would be like.

Upon my return from Memphis (working with and being surrounded by greatness), my questions were answered. The fight choreographer (and I use the term loosely) was a former circus performer named Craig, who thought that knowing how to do a handstand and juggle qualified him to choreograph broadsword and quarterstaff fights. I sized up Craig carefully, trying hard to give him the benefit of the doubt, and he came up lacking. His fights were sophomoric at best, and dangerous as hell at worst. (They were paying him how much???)

O.K., so I can deal with a bad choreographer. I'll just get the other fighters together and make sure what we do is safe. So long as I give a good performance, the theatre staff and artistic director will appreciate me all the more, right? Well...

I soon learned that the artistic and executive staffs at the Children's Theatre tend to take a rather myopic approach to theatre, and since Action Theatre falls completely outside of their realm, such concepts as actor safety and comfort tend to not even enter into consideration. I mean, these people can stage a Dr. Seuss book brilliantly; but ask them to provide a quarterstaff that won't break every third show, and you have a major incident on your hands!

Well, the horror stories began, and there were many of them, too many to detail here. I will however list the highlights:

For footwear, we were asked to wear deck shoes wrapped in burlap, including the soles. So, rather than walking or running, we were skating constantly.

For quarterstaves, the designer had the concept that thin twiggy looking bent things would be wonderful? So, we had "quarterstaves" that averaged an inch to and an inch and a half thick, some with very severe bends to them (so severe, in fact, that in order to execute an attack, I often had to rotate the staff, mid-swing, so that the end did not strike my partner). These fragile little twigs had been cut green, and as they dried (those that lasted long enough to dry), they became even more fragile. Some would break just from leaning on them, much less from fighting.

For the Little John versus Robin Hood fight (on the log over the river), again the designer developed a "concept." Little John and Robin Hood would climb onto a plank that was being supported by twelve other actors via cross bars. We would be standing, effectively, on the shoulders of twelve men and trying to do a quarterstaff fight some five feet off the stage. The original plank we were given was eighteen inches wide, but after I fell off once, and Little John fell off three times, the designer grudgingly agreed that "perhaps" it should be a little wider. This was certainly one of the most dangerous moments in the show, because every time Little John or I did so much as weight change, the entire plank would rock and sway (sometimes drastically). As for the choreography, this fight was repetitive, uninspired and dangerous (requiring me to leap over the heads of the poor guys holding the plank, land on the stage some nine feet away, and then get doused with buckets of water). I wouldn't have minded any of these things, had my shoes not felt like I was fighting in stocking feet on a marble floor.

For the Guy of Gisbourne bit, the concept was to use every combination of the following weapons

against each other: broadsword, shortsword, quarterstaff, dagger and unarmed. It was a very long exhausting fight (which was choreographed more as a collaborative effort than the others, and as such was at least palatable) which rollicked all over the sparse rough-wood set. However, this theatre (the largest Children's Theatre in America, and second largest in the world with annual earnings in excess of three and a half million) wouldn't spring for good weapons. We had to use the old prop swords that they had bought years earlier for the combat in King Arthur. The metal of these swords can be likened to tin-plated aluminum. Every time the weapons hit, no matter how lightly, deep gouges in the metal appeared, accompanied by a fine mist of metal shavings, as well as a loud "clacking" sound not unlike wood). After one run-through of the fight, the sword edges closely resembled the toothed edge of a hand-saw, my eyes were swollen and tearing from the metal shavings in them, and my nerves were raw from concern that the damned swords wouldn't hold up for the show.

Now, throughout all of these dangers, we, the fighters, did not remain silent. No, we dutifully reported each and every concern to our fight choreographer, who assured us that he would discuss it with the director "tonight." This went on for weeks; we would complain, he would assure, we would continue to rehearse believing in our hearts that sooner or later someone would recognize the danger we were in and speak up.

You may ask, "Why didn't you talk to the artistic director yourselves?" Good question. Perhaps it was because there was indeed a position in the company opening up, and everybody wanted to be on their best behavior and not make waves. Perhaps it was due to the Children's Theatre's reputation for going through actors the way I go through Gatorade. Everyone likes to work, and no one wants to burn a bridge unless they have to.

Well, eventually I had to. It came to dress rehearsal, and I was still fighting in burlap with twigs and crappy swords that went "clack." We were in Act II, the first of the two Guy of Gisbourne fights, and several things happened at once: my foot slipped on the burlap just as Guy struck my quarterstaff twig with his crappy shortsword sending metal shaving into my eyes, and breaking my twig. Had it not been for my partner's control (thank you, Scott Thun), I could have been seriously hurt. As it was I had twisted my ankle, and seriously injured my composure. I stopped the fight, turned to the Artistic Director and said: "Until the safety concerns are cleared up, I won't go on with the fights."

First of all, you just don't stop a rehearsal at the Children's Theatre of Minneapolis. It just isn't done. It has happened only once before, and that person was promptly fired. Second of all, the Artistic Director had no idea what I was talking about. Our fight choreographer had never passed on our concerns to him about safety. So I looked like a prima donna. In fact, I was labeled as such in a following argument with the Assistant Executive Director who said: "If it were up to me, mister, you'd be fired right now!"

Needless to say, the Children's Theatre and I have had a parting of the ways, all because I wanted shoes that wouldn't slip and sticks that wouldn't break. The rest I could deal with, even standing on my head in a bucket of water (didn't tell you about that one, did I?).

David "Pops" Doersch, a Certified Actor/Combatant, is the Founder and Artistic Director of En Garde Unlimited!, a fight troupe and stage combat school in Minneapolis.

DENNIS GRAVES, PREMIER SWORDCUTLER

by Linda McCollum

Based on a series of interviews by Dale Girard

Lack of information about Dennis Graves has created a mystique about this swordcutler, who lives in the middle of Colorado, and makes real weapons, museum replica swords with embellishments that are almost impossible to differentiate from the real thing and some of the finest combat worthy stage weapons in the business. Finding out who this man, considered the premier swordcutler in America, is was an intriguing question that Dale Girard set out to explore.

Dennis Graves does not promote any kind of mystical aura. No magical incantations, no blades tempered in blood. In fact, he is a rather personable recluse living in a middle class neighborhood in Boulder, Colorado, supporting his family which consists of his wife Pam and their three cats, as a machinist and part-time swordcutler. His quaint home also houses the studio where some of the finest stage combat weapons available today are made. There was no magic, no mysticism. Just simple, honest answers from a man who loves his work and wants to share his knowledge and skills with others. The whole process of discovering Dennis Graves demystified a number of myths about swordmaking as well.

Dennis has always lived in Colorado. Being a swordcutler in Boulder has never been a problem for him. In fact it has had its advantages. Since the traditional role of a swordcutler, or furbisher, is to assemble the work of the bladesmith, the grinder, the hiltmaker and the handlebinder into a finished weapon, living in the middle of the country makes him equidistant from major centers of theatre activity and saves him having to ship his finished swords three thousand miles across the country. He also finds it rather surprising that theatre people on either coast take him more seriously than people in his own home town of Boulder. "If you are from out of town, most people think you must really be for real. Boulder, Colorado is out of town to everywhere in the world."

Dennis Graves' beginnings as a swordcutler began some twenty years ago with the Colorado Shakespeare Festival. At that time the Colorado Shakespeare Festival (CSH) became interested in authenticity in their sword fights and started investigating the idea of using 'Shakespearean weapons in their productions. Most theatres at that time were using whatever was available and just pretending that it was an Elizabethan sword. CSF was looking at actual weapons and fencing manuals of the period and trying to piece together what actors would have done in Shakespeare's time with weapons and swordplay. There wasn't anyone who could really make the swords or anywhere to buy them. Dennis remembers how laid back the Festival was at that time.



They weren't doing as many performances as they are now and the actors actually had time to go to an optional fencing practice. At one time anybody in the company who was interested, whether they had a fighting part or not, would show up at these fencing practices and be schooled in what the Festival understood to be Elizabethan fencing.

Dennis' grandfather had some friends in the theatre department at the University of Colorado that had worked with him in vaudeville and in the projectionist business. He was able to introduce Dennis, who was in high school at the time, to the head of the Theatre Department who invited Dennis to come and watch the fencing practice and get involved with it.

Dennis was intrigued with the idea of authenticity that was being explored. For weapons the Festival had welded ponderous pieces of cold bar stock shaped roughly like Elizabethan swords and daggers that weighed as much as five pounds. They bent continually and were always having to be straightened out. Dennis wanted something better to fight with. The closest thing available at that time were the replica Spanish wall hangers that were coming into the country by the thousands. Dennis bought some of these and tried to reinforce them to make them combat serviceable. He eventually realized that he could probably build something from scratch that would be more substantial and more suitable.

While an art student working in metal sculpture at University of Colorado, Dennis found he needed some credits outside of art to graduate. About that time the Colorado Shakespeare Festival needed some swords. They got together. "In 1968 I made quite a number of my first generation replica swords, maybe forty pieces. I made the hilts out of round bar stock, bolts, concrete ties and standard chain links. Most of the blades were cut from bed rail." Becoming a swordcutler was where Dennis' interest in fencing, art and metal work all came together. This was his start at being a part-time swordcutler.

Dennis Graves has studied fencing intermittently for over sixteen years with a very patient and indulgent instructor, Gary Copeland, who was a former student of Ralph Faulkner. He learned all he could about fencing. As he learned more about how a sword was used in different periods, he was able to make a more credible, authentic weapon. What makes a Dennis Graves' sword different from other theatrical weapons is that he makes a real sword, not just a theatrical sword. His weapons are as much like a period combat weapon as possible.

The thing that initially bothers me the most, that you see in every production with swords, is that there is no respect for the sword as a weapon by the characters. Actors are so used to handling dull blunt weapons they don't think of them as being sharp or of inflicting injury so they don't portray that and the audience doesn't pick up on that...Everyone thinks of a knife as being a dangerous instrument. If you are facing someone with a three inch knife you feel the real threat of being cut and you can imagine the injury that that can inflict. but the same people don't see a three foot sword as being very dangerous. Drawing a sword in a crowded room three hundred years ago had about the same impact as pulling a machine pistol out from under your coat today. People understand what they are looking at and would have some fear of it. People of Shakespeare's time would have had that same fear of a naked sword.

Dennis feels that a lot of exciting things could be done with stage fights if choreographers simply knew more about how a period weapon was handled, what it could do and had the time,

space, and the right weapons to work out better fights.

I have never understood why a fight could not be made safe and exciting using the style of the period. When a fight is so slow that the audience can see it, you are constantly seeing all the openings that weren't attacked and all the missed opportunities. A trained fencer is constantly tearing the fight apart as he watches it.

Studying fencing styles, history, and understanding how various swords were made in their day can reveal some points about weapon usage that many people may not have considered, such as the flagrant anachronism in the unreality of edge to edge play with medieval swords. As a swordmaker Dennis points out that parries were made with the flat in sweeping molinets rather than battering the weapons together edge to edge. The reason they would have used the flat of the blade rather than taking it on the edge is that the edge was precious. It had been carefully forged to create the sharp edge. It was so thin that it could nick easily. Modern swords are designed to have a round thick edge and can take the edge to edge play.

But the best stage sword blades available today do not have the same geometry of a medieval sword. If a fight choreographer was parrying with the flat of the blade today, he would find the blades bending. Modern blades are basically a flat piece of steel and will bend against that flat. A medieval blade would not do this. It was an I-beam section that would bend against two flats. The strength of the medieval blade was much greater than the best modern blade today.

A large part of understanding how a weapon was actually used in its day is understanding not just the style of fencing but how one actually killed his opponent with the sword. By never losing touch with the real function of a period weapon, Dennis is able to make a more credible theatrical version. But even though he has been able to create authentic period swords, an actor who does not understand how a weapon functions can totally destroy the illusion of authenticity.

The way that a sword actually cuts or stabs is not understood so you get some really unbelievable kills...Anyone who has dealt with swords realizes that wide bladed swords or thick bladed swords don't slide in and slide right back out. A very sharp smallsword might penetrate three inches into a lung and come out cleanly but running a rapier through someone and pulling it cleanly out is pretty incredible.

Dennis went on to point out that "rapiers cut only in a pushing or dragging motion." Actors pretend that an epee blade is sharp enough to cut off a hand. If it was really as sharp as a three foot long scalpel, it wouldn't have any rigidity.

Dennis learned early on that a real period combat weapon was not going to be able to sustain stage combat well, so concessions had to be made on durability. It is still hard for Dennis to get used to the idea that something had to be so much tougher for the stage. Real swords don't work for stage fighting. Swords have to be built to withstand the daily rigors of stage combat and the constant pounding by inexperienced actors.

At first, swordmakers used epee blades for their weapons by default since they were readily available and there wasn't much else around.. But they were never designed for right angle hitting edge to edge. They tend to break. Any metal that flexes is going to fatigue. If it is tempered properly it will flex to a certain point without fatiguing, but every time it is bent further than that, something is stretched. Every little nick in the blade helps add to this stress that is created. These nicks are referred to in the machine terminology as "stress risers." This is why a nick

in an epee blade can be the beginning of a break. Epee blades are also difficult for the audience to see. All they can follow, if anything, is an occasional flash.

There are better alternatives today. The Musketeer blade is an improvement though here again you tend to lose the last third of the blade in stage lighting. It is basically a super large epee blade. Its size gives it more steel so it takes more to break it. But it is still a triangular blade section designed for thrusting. For smallswords it is excellent since the shape so nearly approximates a lot of the later smallswords. They play crisply when they are shortened to the appropriate smallsword length. But pretending that it is a rapier blade gives you the same problems as the epee, just delayed a little longer. It is much lighter than any kind of rapier blade and simply doesn't play the same way. They bend enough that attacks on the blade are not clean and a beat does not carry the blade out of line the way it does with a real rapier blade. So it looks like a modern epee.

The Schlager blade is designed to be hit edge to edge and will survive better than an epee blade or a musketeer blade. Some Fight Directors dislike the schlager because it has no concave surfaces it doesn't make a swooshing sound, and it doesn't ring.

"Somebody got the idea a long time ago that swords ring. Real swords don't ring." It really grates on Dennis to make a sword do anything that is unswordlike. A lot of people are really adamant about having their swords ring. They actually choreograph the fight so that the ringing is controlled and you get an almost musical approach to the fight that builds up into a crescendo of clashing steel.

Dennis points out that the ring that you get in a sword doesn't have as much to do with the blade as with the fit of the blade in the hilt. The ring is caused by vibration. Too much vibration will cause the weapon to break. Cup hilt weapons can be made to ring like a church bell. Tightening the hilt to make it ring is a bad idea because the tang only understands torque, and too much torque will cause it to break. Dennis finds that this preoccupation with "ringing steel" shows a lack of imagination on the director's part.

There is more going on in a fight than heavy metal slamming together. To the really uneducated audience the ringing of steel might mask the fact that the combatants are aiming for each other's swords rather than each other's bodies, or that the fight is a quarter of the normal speed. There is so much more you could do that wouldn't need that ring. You could make it sound dangerous with a dull whack.

Dennis avoids brass in his weapons usually because of its look and the fact that it is not an authentic weapon material until the mid to late eighteenth century in munitions pieces.

When a lot of swords, cutlasses and hangers were needed they were made with cast brass hilts. The brass used then was substantially different from the yellow brass that is used on today's weapons. But brass hilts just really don't hold up very well. They were only a way of producing a lot of weapons cheaply. Rapiers were never made with brass hilts. So no matter how solid a brass hilt can be cast, it is still inappropriate.

Brass is used for a number of other materials. Since hilts on Bronze Age or early Medieval swords were made with very perishable materials such as ivory, leather, bone, horn (materials that aren't very substantial for theatrical use), brass is often used to cast the shapes of these various materials. The weight of a brass hilt then becomes very different from these other materials.

If the blade is simply bolted through a clearance hole in this brass hilt, it will rattle every time it is hit. This vibration is what tends to loosen it. The brass hilt wears as the steel rubs against it and eventually it deflects far enough that it is just like breaking it over the edge of the stairs.

This cast lump of brass on an epee blade throws the balance completely off. The weapon doesn't want to stay in the scabbard, and the point flies out when it's being fought with. The balance of the weapon is such that it breaks easier. When actors complain that the weapons are too heavy it is usually not a matter of weight at all. It is a matter of balance. Most theatrical weapons are balanced so poorly that even a weapon weighing half the weight of a real sword would fatigue the user in a very short time because of the balance.

Manganese is crispier metal and holds up a littler better, even though it is more difficult to work with. Steel has always been the superior or more technically correct iron to use. It is difficult to shape a solid steel hilt which is actually hollow sections of pipe or pieces of metal bent to shape and welded together. Solid steel grips are very sound. They also do not fail, but they are heavy and must be carefully fitted. One of the difficulties is that the grip actually only contacts the tang on both ends where it passes through an oval hole towards the pommel end of the hilt. If these holes don't fit the tang exactly, it rattles and after a while the impact begins to open up the hole in the softer iron of the grip. The grip itself is not destroyed, but it can't be good on the tang.

Over the years he has tried several different materials for grips. Wood was traditional and holds up quite well when taken care of. (Rifle stocks were made of wood for years and somehow soldiers managed to take care of them).

A walnut sword grip would probably do just fine on a sword that was used in an actual campaign. But when it has to take more beating in one night on stage than a sword would take in its lifetime, walnut begins to fail. It condenses, and the grip gets shorter. Every time the pommel is tightened, it's the grip that gives. As it gets shorter the wire becomes looser.. It doesn't have as far to go around the grip. The ends don't remain parallel. This is partly because of the tangs on modern blades. If the tang begins to pull more to one side than another, the grip condenses on that side, the ends don't stay parallel and no matter how much you tighten it, it just gets more and more bent. Turn the grip around and it bends the other way. Water attacks them. Stage blood and anything liquid soaks in. This causes problems.

The Lexan grip, a polycarbonate plastic, has become Dennis' signature. It is practically indestructible. You can strike a lexan grip with a two pound hammer on an anvil and it just bounces. You don't even see a mark. Dennis has never had a lexan grip fail. Even at four or five times the cost of a wood grip they are one of the best investments in quality upgrade you can choose.

Renaissance and Medieval swords were all hand made, one at a time, with all parts being individually made. Interchangeability was unthinkable and repairs were not something that could be randomly done. Certain Medieval armorers became very good at doing repairs fast. Armorers would be present at tournaments and support their patrons by making repairs as needed. It is known that armorers accompanied armies in the field and supported them in arms.

Armorers have always been very necessary. They have always kept company with princes and yet could always be blamed for all the war and carnage that went on

too. Someone has always wanted it to be the armorers fault for people killing each other. Armorers don't see it that way. They have usually claimed an exemption from having to participate. They go dutifully to the hero's funeral, but they have no desire to carry a weapon themselves

It takes a certain level of skill to take swords apart and put them back together and keep them sound. This is where most theatre technicians are totally lost . They are bewildered by metal work. There is no one to show them what to do and nowhere where they can read what to do, so they are lost. And it is not really their fault.

There are not enough swords out there, nor enough of a demand to require that they should know anymore than they do. They throw everything in a prop box and just box weld it. A sword is different from other props. It has to actually function. It has to take a lot of hard pounding. The kind of welding on the set or a piece of furniture just won't do on a sword.

Along these lines, Dennis Graves has been working on a book on the maintenance and care of stage weapons. Dennis will also be at the National Stage Combat Workshop in Las Vegas this summer sharing information with the Fight Masters and participants at the workshop.

From his catalog it would seem that Dennis specializes in a few specialized designs for rapiers, daggers, smallswords and crosshilt swords. Dennis points out that he actually doesn't specialize. He just saves the actor from having to make choices he may not be equipped to make. "To the novice one rapier looks like another. One can't tell what marks one piece as northern and another southern, early or late. And these subtle differences don't show up on the stage even if you are looking for them."

But not everything that Dennis Graves makes is in his catalog. He will do custom swords, even fantasy swords within the bounds of good taste and as long as it doesn't get in the way of the utility of the weapon. He makes various polearms and stage sabres. Each Dennis Graves weapon is individually made from standards he has developed over twenty years of experience in building swords. Every stage grade sword is exactly the same as a replica sword. And it is the parts inside that make it work better, such as the integrity of the welds, the grip, the soundness of the binding and the way it is fitted together. The difference in stage grade and replica weapons is the surface finish and the detail on the replica sword. And since each sword is individually built and not coming off an assembly line, one can request variations such as a longer grip or the balance closer to the point and it will be there in a Dennis Graves's sword.

This raises some concern about interchangeability of parts with a custom designed and fitted sword. If a blade breaks what do you do? Dennis pointed out that a hand fitted blade is going to last a lot longer because the hilt and the blade are not fighting each other all the time. It is not wearing a new shoulder seat with one shoulder while the other hangs out in space. Contrary to popular belief radius shoulders (rounded shoulders) do not add strength since blades are heat treated. Filing the shoulders square and being careful not to undercut them is the correct manner of seating the blade in the hilt. Real sword shoulders are square, not rounded. And since Dennis works off a template, the fit of his blade into the hilt will take a minimum of filing. The ricasso on his rapiers varies no more than a sixteenth of an inch.

In buying a sword, Dennis suggests that you look at the parts and materials used, the construction, the durability, and the dependability. Also look at the weapon's correct use and maintenance. Take a look at different options as well as the cost effectiveness in the long run.

As a swordcutler he appreciates feedback. Praise is great and flattering.. What he really likes to hear is what an actor using his swords finds important or what doesn't matter, what looks nice, what works and what doesn't.

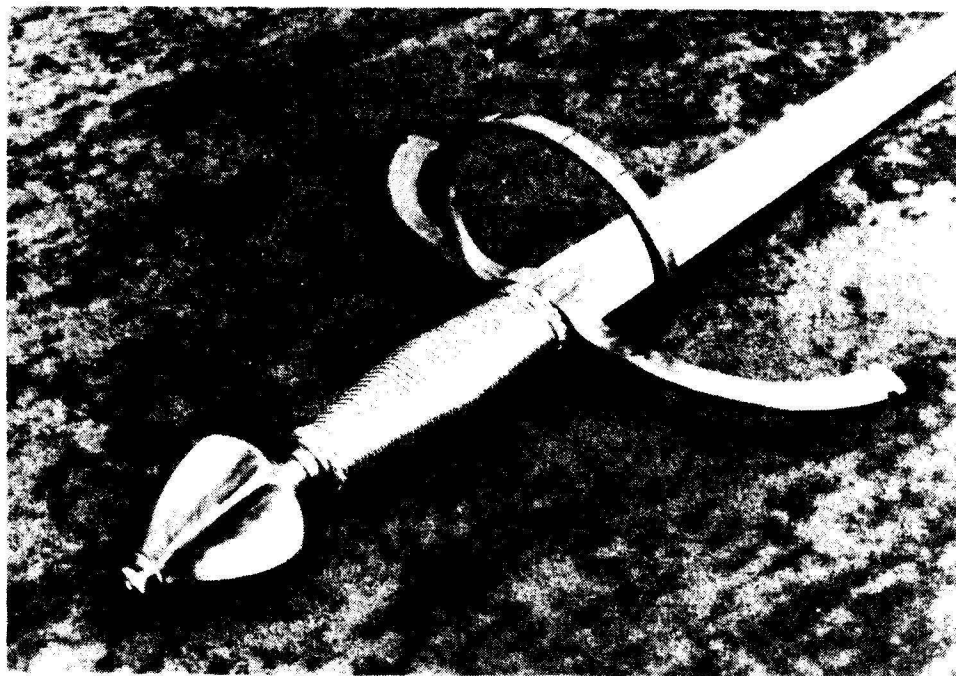
A little bit of Dennis goes into every sword. This is especially true of something that stretches him a little bit, that he has to research, do sketches for, and try something new with. Something of Dennis goes into that process. Like a painter working on a canvas, a stone carver cutting a piece of marble, there is a record of Dennis left in that steel.

A lot of people ask Dennis how they can become a swordmaker and if he will help them. He'd love to and does. But he can't give them the discipline that is needed, and that is why only one in a hundred gets very far as a swordmaker. It takes a lot of time and discipline. There are no courses they can take or books they can refer to. "You have to learn some metal work skills and just try it." He sees other swordcutlers as peers, just as in the old days when all swordcutlers lived and worked on the same street. Today they still see one another as colleagues and not competitors. Each has his special skill which he brings to the art of swordmaking.

Dennis would like to be a full-time swordcutler but to do that one needs to produce weapons in quantity. Like many dedicated swordcutlers, Dennis is unwilling to sacrifice quality for quantity.

Dennis would also like to be one of those people who inspires others. That is part of the thrill for him. He'll do a lot to help others that are interested in the same things he is. But like a lot of artists he is a very private person. To find out what he is all about you merely need to look at what he has done, what he knows and what he is capable of doing. But don't try to look too close at him personally. As Dennis says, "Most actors/artists should be able to identify with that."

Dennis is quite willing to share what he has learned with others. Even the "Real Secret" of being a swordcutler.... "It is a lot harder than just knowing some magical incantation. It takes discipline and skill."



Early Renaissance Italian Sword

A GUIDE FOR THE RECENTLY CERTIFIED

or WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?

by Dale Anthony Girard

As recently certified students enter the real world, they often ask themselves, “what am I to do with this new knowledge?” Some are content as actors knowing that when they are next asked to play MacBeth, Hamlet or Marjorie in **Extremities**, they will feel safe and confident in their abilities to sell the illusion. Others will go back to teaching theatre or directing plays, knowing how to protect their actors from unsafe combat, what to look for in a professional fight director, and how to better communicate their ideas to him/her. Still others will have simply had a great time learning about something that they really have no intention of ever using again. And then there are those who fall in love with the art and decide to pursue it as a career. It is to these mad few that this article is addressed.

While one should feel a great sense of accomplishment at receiving certification as an actor combatant, it by no means qualifies the student as a professional in the field. You have merely passed a basic class with a performance test of a minimum number of required moves in a very exacting and professional art. (See SAFD Policy Statement, ACTOR/COMBATANT, in the Fall 1989 **Fight Master** for further clarification.) As one could not expect to become Mikhail Baryshnikov after a class or two in basic ballet, and would be considered extremely foolhardy to go about announcing oneself as fully capable of choreographing fine technically sound professional ballet masterpieces, the new actor/combatant should fight the temptation to consider him/herself a full blown fight choreographer, stunt artist, or all purpose Errol Flynn.

In just about any other field, there seems to be less temptation to abuse a basic knowledge. Yet many new actor combatants feel ready to compete with the maestros that taught them and who have spent years perfecting their craft. Part of this problem stems from a general lack of knowledge about our craft on the part of the rest of the performing arts world. Theatre directors, teachers, and most others in the position of selecting a fight director or combat instructor simply do not know enough about what is safe or sound technique to protect themselves against the self professed “fencer turned fight choreographer,” much less to be selective about one’s SAFD credentials. The other part of the problem is due to an excess of zeal on the part of the new actor combatant.

In an article in the January 1985 **Fight Master**, David Boushey vehemently addresses this important issue:

What kind of business are we in where one doesn’t have to earn his spurs through years of hard work and discipline? What other occupation in this country exists where a person takes a workshop comprising of a few weeks time in order to pass himself off as a professional, claiming all the necessary credits to compete with those who have spent years at their craft. I wish some of our colleagues wouldn’t be so impatient when pursuing their careers. Rather than developing one’s skills over time and trial as the master of old, one chooses to exaggerate and pad one’s credentials. In this country, more so than any other nation I can think of, you have this feeling of wanting it NOW.

There is an old adage in this business—the less you know, the more you think you know. I don’t consider this field so shallow that a few weeks of preparation and a couple of books can make a teacher or fight choreographer out of you.

We must adhere to certain standards if we are going to continue in our quest to make the fight director a viable part of the theatre. If just anyone is a choreographer then how can professional standards in this business be maintained? We will only degrade our profession through sub-standard work.

We have got to start thinking about our art and how we can further it rather than how we can get a job with a minimum of credentials before someone else does.

By this, Mr. Boushey did not intend to discourage those who are diligently working at pursuing a career; rather, he was simply addressing the problem of the potential abuse of knowledge. If not controlled, "mad ambition" could destroy the credibility of the Society, and along with it, the art he loves.

So, where do you go from here? How does a certified Actor/Combatant develop one's skills over time as did the masters of old? This question is not an easy one, nor is an acceptable path very obvious. But there definitely are means of improving one's skills and knowledge that are appropriate, challenging and rewarding.

New actor combatants are usually trained (or at least adjudicated) by one or more masters of the SAFD. Try to keep in contact with this individual. If you attended the National Stage Combat Workshop, I'm, sure you found a maestro or two that you hit it off with. Don't let that relationship die. The masters are very busy people, but they always have time for a serious student and friend. Many of the maestros offer private or group classes that you can attend; remaining in contact with them will allow you the opportunity of knowing when and where. If a master is not available in your area, he may be able to recommend a Certified Teacher within the Society that would be able to help you.

If no one is available, do not despair. I would still recommend that you keep in touch with those who trained you. Let them know what you are doing, and how you are doing it, and ask them what you should be doing in order to do it better. The Society will also be able to help you locate other SAFD members and inform you on how to contact them. The Journal, and the soon to be released "newsletter" are your way of communicating with the Society as a whole. Don't sit back and let others do all the talking. If you are interested in the Society and the business, be part of it.

If you are still a student at a university or college, you have many options available to you. You can push for your department to bring in one of the masters to choreograph your next production, or to have him instruct special classes or workshops (preferably both). Push for shows with fights in them for your next season. You may even be able to bring one of the masters in as a guest artist to teach a complete adjudication class. Also contact your university program council and try to bring in one of the masters as part of the special interest college lecture series. Use your enthusiasm to rally others. College is also an excellent environment in which to collect a group of similarly interested actors and start a "Stage Combat Club." Many universities grant funds to student clubs and organizations with a strong following and an academic foundation. With these funds, you can bring in a master to conduct workshops and lectures yourself.

Being a university student offers other kinds of opportunities as well. As stage combat is a movement discipline, it is extremely important to explore and develop your range of kinesthetic movement awareness through a variety of styles and techniques. Taking classes in fencing, dance, stage movement, mime, and self defense/martial arts will keep you busy, and will expand your movement vocabulary. Ballet (although seemingly an unrelated movement form) not only stems from the disciplines of period sword play, but is an incredible learning tool for the physical instrument. While your university may not offer classes in all of these subjects, there are many

clubs and organizations that sponsor events, workshops or classes at special rates to students. Take advantage of them! Stage combat is not just sword play, falls and punch ups; it is an extreme martial discipline that takes years to master.

Take classes in acting, directing and script analysis to expand your theatrical knowledge. Music theory and sight reading are also helpful as many fights are performed to music. Having a grasp of the lingo you will encounter in the score, and a basic understanding of the vocabulary you need to communicate to the pianist and conductor will make a world of difference. Shakespeare, period literature, history classes (Middle Ages and Renaissance in particular), and classes related to teaching all offer opportunities to improve your craft by adapting what you're learning to your own purposes.

Most universities will allow students to "audit" classes (with instructor and/or adviser consent) allowing them to focus on the content of the class without having to worry about credits, tests, grades or financial commitments. This will allow you to glean what is important to you and your career without jeopardizing your class load or GPA.

In every class, try to focus on the material specifically related to your field. In Shakespeare classes, offer to do your reports on the fights. In social studies, look at how the sword affected dress, social structures and customs. In period literature, find how the sword affected the written word. There are many references to masters, duels, battles, honor; these will no doubt interest the class, and they are of the special interest to you.

Many dance programs have classes in choreography. These classes generally require a basic knowledge of dance terminology, style and form but can prove very beneficial. Although this is not "fight" choreography, it will make you aware of space, time, relationships of bodies and levels.

If your university offers classes in martial arts or self defense, be sure to enroll. If you have a choice in forms, I would recommend Aikido and Arnis as two forms particularly well suited to adaptation to stage techniques. Aikido is a passive, non-violent, form of self-defense that develops a beautiful style of body awareness, focus and center, as well as several impressive falls and rolls. Arnis' form translates well into several weapon styles for stage, and instills an appreciation for the weapon and what it can actually do. Arnis also provides a physical and psychological point of observation to the mechanics and stratagem of combat. If your college doesn't offer them, martial arts are often offered outside schools, sometimes at a discount to students.

Learn all you can while you're in college. You'll move on to the real world soon enough. While "Getting Out" seems to be one of the primary goals of going to college, realize what you are really there for—a solid foundation of knowledge and skills that will assist you throughout your career. If your degree program isn't meeting all your needs, see if you can design your own degree program, or explore the options of transferring to another school. At least come up with a plan to fill in the gaps of your own situation.

If you haven't gotten everything you want and can get out of an educational institution, don't leave it. Grow where you are, at your own pace, and meet your own standards first. Sift through what you have learned, and stay aware of how much more there is to learn. You will "wow" those around you when you are damn good and ready. Do not rush past your weak points, for in time they will come back and be your own undoing. As the saying goes, "slow and steady wins the race."

A little analogy I might offer is this: As the tension and anxiety of the adjudication test approaches, I often ask my students why they took the class? Was it to learn and advance their skills in stage combat and to grow as individuals and as artists, or was it to prove to someone else that they're worth recognition and thus deserve a piece of paper saying so? I remind them

that they don't have to prove anything to anyone, except themselves. It's all "self worth" not "other worth." If you're not really ready for the test, you shouldn't feel you have to take it. When all you are after is a piece of paper, doing just the minimum in order to get by, then that is probably all you will get. Instead, get everything you possibly can out of each opportunity. If you haven't gotten everything you need, be honest enough to admit this to yourself and take the steps necessary to remedy the situation.

Another opportunity worth looking into is the availability of funds, especially student loans and grants that are available to honor students, or any student willing to work through the stacks of paperwork involved. There is often money available for special studies and further education, especially if specific training is not available at your university or in your immediate area. Several Society members have tapped these resources with wonderful results, and I hope in future issues they will relate the details of their experiences to those who now must find the path through the red tape.

As part of your fight club, or as a separate entity, start a "fight of the month club." Each month someone will act as a director proposing a particular fight sequence with specific problems, props, character traits, text and subtext and other challenges that an actual director might propose to a fight choreographer—from a real or made up show. Then everyone else will act as an independent fight director, each choreographing the piece within the specific guidelines set forth by the director. (If the director has envisioned something that can not be done effectively in the time or space available or suggests something that you deem unsafe, let him know and offer alternatives. Work towards a solution where you both can win). Each choreographer will teach their routine to a team of club member. In this way you will deal with one director and one idea at a time, but you will be able to see how others would approach the concept and how they deal with their team. You can see even in this closed environment how much interpretations and styles differ.

Discuss your observations, being positive and constructive. This should be approached as a very low risk "lab" experience where you can learn and grow within a group of mutually supportive, safety-conscious individuals. Don't condemn each other's work, but rather be willing to grow and learn from each other. You will have the invaluable experience of getting objective views of your work.

If you contact one of the masters soon enough before one of your presentations, you may be able to bring him in to observe your routines and join in on your discussions afterwards. If a master is not in your area, you may be able to find one who is interested in seeing a video of the exercises and would be willing to offer comments. (If this is the case, you would be best to video the routine from both the audience point of view as well as that of up center stage. This will allow the master to observe and note the techniques that were masked to the audience).

Although the maestros try to make themselves accessible to serious students, do not assume that a master is always ready and willing to jump in and do everything for you. As I mentioned before, keep in touch with the maestros, let them know what you are up to, and always ask them if they have the time to offer you their services. Many times the maestros are in the midst of a production and may not be readily available to meet your schedule. Realize that such projects usually require all of their time, focus and attention. Another maestro or certified teacher may very well be available to offer assistance in viewing your work.

After sufficient experimentation, practice, constructive criticism and closed rehearsal, have your fight of the month club form an amateur theatre group that presents scenes of "action theatre." Offer your shows to local fairs, festivals, carnivals and the like, where you can perform in relative security. Hone your skills and observe first hand how audiences react to your presentations.

Many Renaissance festivals look for local acts to fit their demanding stage schedules and

incredibly tight budgets. School carnivals, local fund raisers, madrigal feasts and such also welcome scenes from Shakespeare. A barroom brawl with cowboys and saloon girls might go over well at your city's next Harvest Festival or car dealership promotional. It is best to work at local, "low key" functions where you are not always under the eyes of critics. This gives you the opportunity to learn what works, without really putting your career on the line.

If at all possible, the "choreographer(s)" of the piece(s) being performed should be in the audience (not on stage), so they can actually view their work. Rotate choreographers so that everyone gets a chance to perform, as well as to observe their piece(s) with the benefit of an audience.

If you'd like an opportunity to work with different people, the Fight Master Posts occasional auditions that might interest you. These may include Renaissance Festivals, the **Legend of Daniel Boone, Tecumseh!**, all of which seek trained actor/combatants. If you were adjudicated in a private class, at your college or university, it would be wise to attend the National Stage Combat Workshop and receive different perspectives of swordplay from the various masters. Try for certification and recommendation in some of the alternate weapons. Just being certified does not mean you know everything you could. The Society maintains an incredibly rigid policy on safety and effectiveness, but the styles and backgrounds of the masters vary. It would be well to your advantage to reap the benefits of all their unique expertise. Each year the National Workshop also needs a few assistants to the maestros for their classes. Show your interest and apply for these positions. Then bust your butt whenever given the opportunity to do so.

You can also try contacting local and regional theatres, Shakespeare companies, universities and find out who is doing their upcoming fights. If they know, contact that particular master and see if you can work with him while he is in the area or even help on the production. If they do not know, introduce yourself and suggest a specific master or Certified Teacher and let them know why he/she may be of interest to them. This inquiry will cost you nothing but may bring you many benefits in return. (Be sure you get permission from the master before you banter his name about. If the individual you suggested is busy, he/she will undoubtedly suggest another who is free). If a master is coming into town to choreograph a production or teach a workshop, offer to assist him, work as a fight captain or gofer, or see if you may sit in on classes or rehearsals.

As you train more with the masters, and your experiences in fight of the month and local fair and festival performances help you develop a strong background of techniques and confidence in your abilities—try your hand at area high schools and then possible with local community theatres. Do not try this until you, and one of the masters, feel you are really ready. An inexperienced fight director teaching inexperienced actors is like the blind leading the blind..through a mine field! It is incredibly important then, that during this process you keep in touch with your mentor, asking questions. Realize that you do not know everything and that there are those who are willing to help you learn more.

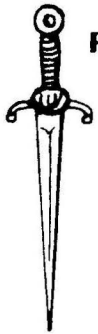
If, after several positive experiences with high schools and community theatres, a paying choreographer position is available in your area, but does not offer enough to bring in a master for the position, take the position under consideration and see if you can use a portion of the money to bring in a master to look at what you are doing and offer notes. This procedure is wise in your first few paying gigs, for if you spend the time listening and following the advice of the master, the risk of possible accident or failure is greatly reduced, and if the job goes well, more will follow.

As you become more confident in your style, and work becomes more available to you, it may not be necessary to bring in a master every time to observe your techniques, or for you

to confer with them as you had earlier. Even at this stage, however, you are not a master. The Society has a ladder of progression and evaluation for its members. Your next step is Teacher Certification. The Society suggest that it should take about five years for an actor/Combatant to progress, through experiences like those offered above, to the level of Certified Teacher. Another five to six years can be expected, to achieve the level of Master.

It is a long hard road, one that is full of difficult moments that offer discoveries about yourself and your craft. it is a rewarding path, however, when taken slowly and seriously. If will generate admiration from your colleagues and maintain that "love" for the art that you felt when you were first adjudicated. Though it is a difficult path, remember that if you work diligently and uphold the values and tradition of the Society, you will never be alone.

Dale Girard is a Certified Actor/Combatant who is completing his teacher Certification in the Society of American Fight Directors and who is an Associate member of the Canadian Society of Fight Directors. He teaches stage combat in the Masters Program at the National Theatre Conservatory in Denver Colorado in conjunction with the Denver Center Theatre Company. He is Regional Representative for the United Stuntmen's Association and Theatrical Stunt Coordinator and Founder of On Edge Productions.



PARRYING DAGGERS AND PONIARDS

by DR. LEONID TARASSUK

Senior Research Associate
Dept. of Arms & Armor
Metropolitan Museum of Art

Consulting Curator
Harding Collection of Arms &Armor
Art Institute of Chicago

The Society of American Fight Directors has published this comprehensive and profusely illustrated monograph, an expansion of the series of three articles previously published in the Fightmaster. This monograph gives a complete history of the development and nomenclature of these weapons, as well as illustrating their wearing and use in attack and defense.

Published at a retail price of \$16.95, we are offering this monograph to members only, at a special price of \$10.00. Every SAFD member should have this valuable reference work in their library. Send check or M.O. for \$10.00 (made out to the SAFD) to:

Linda McCollum
SAFD
P.O.Box 218
Blue Diamond, NV
89004

REVIEWS

The ideas expressed in this section are the opinions of the reviewers and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Society of American Fight Directors as an organization.

ROCK STORIES

The Rainbow Company's production of Bob Mayberry's and Tom Dyer's new play, **Rock Stories**, which is based on tales of the southwest, involved an unusual use of violence. Sammy, a young girl, recounts the details of her father's murder. As she tells the story, the actors playing her father and his assailant struggle. The father tries to choke the attacker and in the struggle the assailant thrusts a knife upwards cutting the father's throat.

The enactment of the first portion of Sammy's story started out realistically with a Bowie knife being pulled. During the action, the knife was discarded and the actual murder was narrated by the young girl with the two "combatants" facing the audience at opposite sides of the stage. The action was mimed in slow motion without any contact between the two combatants.

What was so surprising was the audience's reaction. Even though no contact was made between the two actors during the enactment of the murder, a gasp was heard as the father's head fell back as his throat was slit. The audience's imaginations as they listened to the young girl describe what happened actually created more horror than a realistically enacted act of violence.

Exception is taken with introducing a real knife into this sequence. During the course of the play other action involving props was mimed by the actors. The introduction of a real prop in this sequence wasn't needed and was inconsistent with the style of the play.

Linda McCollum

CELEBRATION

UNLV's production of Harvey Schmidt and Tom Jone's musical, **Celebration**, involved a ritual combat between winter and spring in the second act. This was done by Ian Pugh and Todd Espeland with choreography by Joe Kucan. Spears from Arms and Armor of Minneapolis were used in this slow motion polearm fight on an extremely narrow platform ten feet above the stage. The slow motion pace emphasized the ritual/non-threatening aspect of the fight.

A unique ending was the result of one combatant removing the spear-head from the staff and using it as a knife to slit the other combatant's throat. This was a nice surprise, but was almost too realistic, even in slow motion, for the "fun" ritual element of the celebration. Even though the slaughtered combatant jumped to his feet immediately afterwards and got back into the rhythmical flow of the action, this murder was too realistic.

Linda McCollum

THE THREE MUSKETEERS

In October, I had the privilege of watching David Boushey work at The Pioneer Memorial Theater in Salt Lake City. As part of my dissertation research, I observed David, assisted by Paul Dennhardt, work on **The Three Musketeers** for four days. Although I should state that I didn't get to see the play in performance, I do feel that four days of constant observation gave me an excellent idea of the quality of the production and of the fights in particular.

The Three Musketeers by Alexandre Dumas, adapted and directed by Charles Morey, is a witty, tongue in cheek story of French intrigue in the court of Louis XIII. **The Three Musketeers** is a swashbucklers dream. It is difficult to not get caught up with Aramis, Athos, Porthos and the young Musketeer in training, D'Artagnan, as they rescue damsels in distress, battle the evil Richelieu and his men and create general good natured havoc with their swords.

David choreographed twenty two fights for this production and each of them was well integrated with character and story line. There is one particularly funny exchange in the tavern between the vain Aramis and one of the Cardinal's guards. The guard mistakes Aramis for D' Artagnan, who is incensed that he would be mistaken for a Gascon who can't dress well. As the two begin to fight, the guard slashes through Aramis' shirtfront, ruining the garment and throwing him into a frenzy. The guard, given the advantage, is able to pin Aramis to a table and skewer him in the derriere. It was a wonderful, comic moment, well executed by both fighters.

The two most visually stunning fights incorporated all of the fighters. The first was the initial meeting of the Cardinal's guards and the Musketeers which takes place in the courtyard of the convent. A word here must be said about the set, which was well designed and well utilized in the fights. The stage consisted of two separate revolves. On the inner revolve was the three sided set which was used for the convent, the tavern and the courtyard. The outer revolve allowed for smaller scenes to travel in and out quickly or happen simultaneously with a scene on the inner revolve. This was used to particular advantage in the second of the two larger fights. However, back to the first engagement. The fight matched the four Musketeers against six of the Cardinal's guard. David made use of all the stage space, including a well staged moment up and down the stairs, finally landing on the balcony, where Aramis loses his sword and Athos tosses one up to him in the nick of time. Porthos dispatched his opponent with a well placed thrust through a line of laundry. D'Artagnan and his opponent found themselves on the moving revolve doing a parry/riposte in time to the speed of the revolve, giving them the appearance of moving quickly in space. What was most clever about this scene is the appearance of Dumas, who succeeds in rescuing D'Artagnan by throwing a bottle of ink into the guards face.

The second fight, which centers around the attempted rescue of Constance, nicely blended different weapons and defenses. Porthos and Athos each fought two opponents, all using rapier and dagger, with Athos moving to rapier and cloak after a dagger disarm. Aramis and D'Artagnan each fought a single opponent with Aramis using a single rapier and Constance defending herself against the knife attack of Milady. The Musketeers fought on the outer revolve, while Constance and Milady fought on the inner revolve. What was particularly effective in this fight was the use of slow motion to focus the audience's attention. While Constance and Milady were fighting, the Musketeers went into slow motion and revolved out of the scene, only to reappear at speed while Constance and Milady went into slow motion. The timing on this move was impeccable.

The only sour note in this production was in the casting. It was apparent that thought went into casting the Musketeers. All of them were already trained swordsmen and their degree of skill was obvious. However, this same degree of thought did not go into the casting of the Cardinal's guard. Many of these roles were filled by students from the University of Utah. I have no doubt that they are all good actors, but their lack of movement and fight training was apparent. And while it may be argued that the Musketeers are supposed to be the better fighters, it makes for a much more even and exciting fight when the opponents are better matched in skill level. However, when all is said and done, it was a very exciting evening at the theater, beautifully choreographed by David Boushey.

Donna Kane

CYRANO

Charles Conwell's adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* entitled *Scenes from Cyrano* was produced at the Schubert Theatre in Philadelphia by the University of the Arts. With only six actors in this adaptation of Rostand's romance, the stage seemed bare in this magnificent, newly renovated theatre. The setting consisted of a simple platform placed diagonally from down right to up left, and a few set pieces for various scenes all of which served the action well.

The fight sequence, which consisted of seventeen phrases, was well executed by Peter Pryor as Cyrano and Scott Hitz as Valvert. These two certified actor/combatants combined smallsword work with single rapier showing skillful point work and some imaginative moves. Conwell's choreography made nice use of the stage space and levels with the various angles and diagonals.

The first "thrust home" is on the platform. After managing to parry one of Valvert's attacks with his foot, and having jumped to avoid the swipe at his feet, Cyrano manages to stomp on Valvert's blade and basically disarm him with the point of his sword on Valvert's chest. The second thrust home drove Valvert to the proscenium wall and pinned him there. The third thrust home was the taking of Valvert's blade with a bind disarm. The fourth and final thrust had Valvert cutting to Cyrano's head with Cyrano dropping and extending in the low line in a *passata sotto* that fatally thrust home.

There was an unusual *corps-à-corps* in which Cyrano managed to drive Valvert across the stage while they remained in the *corps-à-corps*. There was a very nicely timed and distanced head cut/avoidance that was quite convincing.

For the most part, Conwell chose to have Cyrano speak his lines, then execute the moves of the fight. Other than at the beginning of the fight when Cyrano further provokes Valvert by lying nonchalantly on the floor and dallying with him, Cyrano didn't seem to be enjoying the fight. While well executed, the fight did not seem to be totally integrated into the characters or the action.

As a whole this was an uneven production. *Scenes from Cyrano* was an interesting way to link some of the fine scenes of this play together in production without great expense and a huge cast. But this romance loses something in its epic proportions when reduced to a cast of six, though extremely competent, young actors. The fight sequence did show the fine quality stage combat training being done at the University of the Arts.

Linda McCollum

RENAISSANCE FAIRE AT MT. HOPE

Michael Donahue's choreography for the Pennsylvania Renaissance Faire at Mt. Hope was exciting and imaginative with many fights and stunts. The Faire this past summer had the usual plethora of fights starting with the human chess game where the chess pieces have to fight for their squares. This involved a very nice rapier and cloak sequence where one man bested two. The use of the cloak was very large and flowing which included some good "hits."

The final fight of the chess match was with rapier and dagger. Although nicely choreographed, somehow this fight seemed stiff and predictable as if (and this was latter confirmed by Michael) these two fighters had reached a certain level of proficiency and were doing the fights on automatic pilot. What a shame for two actors to have a fight literally built around them and then to do it half heartedly and not go that extra inch that will truly sell the fight because they feel that they are too good to work on it. Ah well, we all have experienced that kind of actor haven't we?

Michael Donahue also wrote and choreographed "The Fools Wedding at the Boar's Head Inn" where people were running, jumping and falling all over the set with a number of high falls from a second floor window onto a concealed mat. This was well performed with much energy and enthusiasm and I could see the actors were having a good time with it.

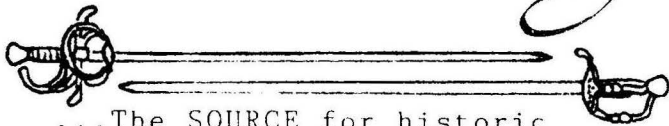
The final fights happen after the joust at the end of the day and this included the entire cast at one point. What made this fight exciting was the way it built up to the entire cast from one pair of fighters. For the first thirty seconds or so the two main antagonists are fighting and then two more start fighting, then two more and two more until the entire cast is fighting. This had a very realistic feel for an event that simply gets out of hand.

The rest of the stage combat at the Faire was involved in full-length shows that I did not attend.

Now it would be easy to criticize the individual actors on their performances but the choreography was tight and even the inexperienced fighters knew where their targets were and were safe. One thing I've always enjoyed in Michael's work is his sense of rhythm and I can always count on his fights being as exciting to hear as to see. I was not disappointed at all in that respect this year.

Payson Burt

Rod Cassteel's Colonial Armoury

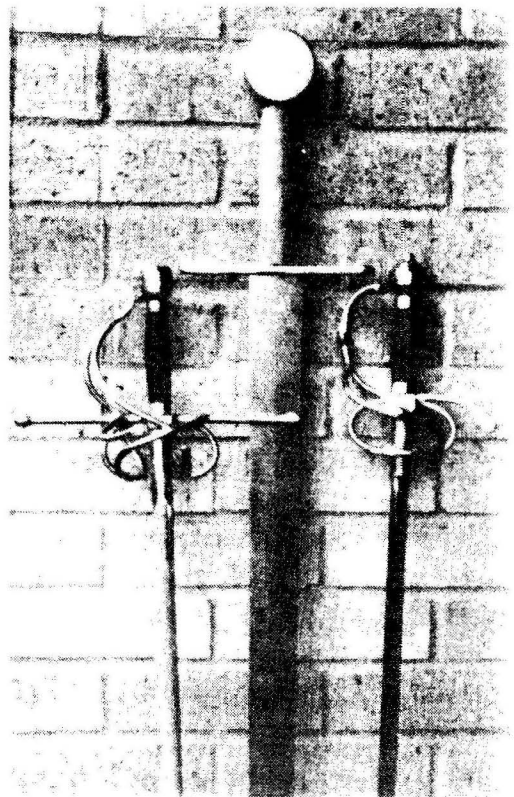


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THE PEN AND THE SWORD

by Dale Anthony Girard

Over the past several years I have developed quite an extensive library, trying to find texts relevant to our art. Because we have no "suggested reading guide" or an "SAFD's What's Hot and What's Not Bibliography," I've found myself wading through every book that I believed might even remotely be applicable or related to stage combat.

After several years of reading, research and wild goose chases, I have only come up with a handful of books on stage combat that I would feel confident recommending to my students and peers as pertinent, safe and accurate. I have found, however, many good books on topics related to the field (fencing, martial arts, stretching, kinesthetic awareness, weapons, history, acting technique) that have proved very valuable to me in developing a broader understanding of our craft. I've also discovered many readily available, but totally outlandish and unsafe, so-called stage combat books that I'd like members of the Society to be aware of, as they could prove lethal in the wrong hands.

I am sure that many of you have encountered similar experiences in your quest. I am hoping that in establishing a forum in **The Fight Master** we can all share our opinions, our time earned discoveries and can come up with a list of recommended reading material. "The Pen and the Sword" should help make it possible for our fellow SAFD members, and stage combat enthusiasts to find the sources they need without wading through a lot of superfluous material.

Since we are a Society, banded together through common interests and goals, it seems important to make this column the voice of all those who are interested and wish to offer their insights and opinions. Each issue will list four books to be reviewed, along with a deadline. The reviews will be collected together and all viewpoints will be explored and edited into one thorough review of each text. Please accept the challenge and participate as often as possible. Even if you do not have access or the opportunity to read all the books listed, please send in your opinions on those you have read. This way a bibliography can be developed by the members of the Society

Contributing writers will be listed for each review. Suggestions for the books to be reviewed that you feel are pertinent or potentially dangerous to our craft would also be greatly appreciated. (With suggested reviews, please include the author's and publisher's names if known).

While no amount of reading or research can ever take the place of the precise, detailed understanding of our craft that only study from a skilled master can impart, I hope this article may serve as a valuable companion and an open invitation for all members to participate in the Society's growth and development.

The books to be covered in our first review are:

Castle, Egerton. **Schools and Masters of Fence**. London: George Bell and Sons, 1892.
[reprinted and revised, Work, Pennsylvania: George Shumway, Publishers, 1969.]

Gordon, Gilbert. **Stage Combat: A Simple Handbook of Techniques**. New York: Theatre Arts Books, 1973.

Hobbs, William. **Stage Combat: The Action to the Word**. New York: St. Martins Press, 1980.

Keezer, Claude D. **Principals of Stage Combat**. Schuleburg, Texas: I. E. Clark, Inc., 1983.

If you do not already own these texts, save your money and check them out of the library to become familiar with their content.

Reviews should be completed by **March 15, 1990** and forwarded to the editor of this column at:

Dale A. Girard
P.O. Box 18954
Denver, CO 80218

For purposes of easy cross reference and comparison, it would be preferable for us to present our individual reviews in similar format, covering certain key points. I offer the following as a suggested guideline for structuring and formulating your opinions.

Your Name:
Book Title:
Author/Editor:
Publisher:

Topic:

What is the exact subject matter of the text? Is it specialized or does it cover a broad field?

Intended Audience

Who is the text written for? (Academia, Professional, Non-Professional, Students, Instructors, Historians, or suitable for wider market). Does the text hit its mark?

About the Author

Is the author a reputable authority on the subject matter? Why or why not?

Structure

Do the chapters follow logical progression? If not, why?

Clarity

Are the ideas communicated in a clear and understandable manner? Is the information complete, or does it assume the reader already has a certain degree of knowledge in the subject area? Does the text answer questions, or create more? Is the text unspecific or unclear in any way?

Readability

Is the text reasonably easy to read? Are there passages or chapters you had to read more than once in order to understand? Is the text boring, too wordy; does it drag? If so, where? Does the text create a sense of enthusiasm toward the subject matter? Is it enjoyable?

Relevance

Is the information directly relevant to stage combat? How and why? If not, what about it is applicable, and why?

Reference Material

Is the text well researched? Does it offer a glossary or an index? Are its arguments, theories and styles supported by and based on fact or conjecture? Is this text a good reference source? Why?

Illustrations

Are their sufficient illustrations to help clarify the text? Are they clear and concise? Do they compliment and clarify the text, or do they raise more questions?

Safety

Does the text satisfactorily stress the importance of safety? Does it define such crucially important subjects, as distance, targets, eye contact, and the correct handling and management of a weapon, including where the tip of a sword should and should never travel? Does the text concern itself with "trouble shooting," and "problem solving" for predictable and not so predictable complications the reader might encounter? Is anything left to chance? Does the text let the reader go from one point to another, without precise explanation? Does it draw the reader's attention to specific safety precautions and potential dangers? Are there blatantly dangerous techniques being offered? If yes, what and where? Is the text completely safe? If not, why?

The Text In Review

Does the text effectively communicate what it led the reader to believe it would communicate? If no, where did it fall short?

Conclusion

Do you feel the Society should endorse this text? If not, under what qualifications would you recommend this text to a fellow Society member? (e.g.: to use as an example of commonplace misinformation)

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

I would like to convey to you and my colleagues some thoughts and experiences of late. I recently had the good fortune to have as my apprentice a gentleman who was a delight to instruct and to share information with. I am speaking of Paul Dennhardt who traveled all the way from the state of Illinois to Salt Lake City, Utah to work with me on a production of **The Three Musketeers** at the Pioneer Memorial Theatre. It was one of the highlights of my professional career, and Paul was an integral part. He not only listened and observed attentively, but he took an active part. If it had not been for his help, I question whether the production would have been the success it was. I had twenty-eight fights in the production and a number of combatants with limited skills. Paul took many of the actor/combatants aside and drilled them, thus saving me the time (and headaches) of trying to choreograph and to train at the same time. He was a tremendous help and source of inspiration and was very well liked by the company.

It was a learning experience for me as his fresh thoughts and enthusiasm were always well placed but not overwrought. I would like to think he learned a great deal from me and the production itself, and I would heartily recommend that some of my gifted young colleagues consider taking on apprenticeships. There is nothing better than a one on one working relationship. I was rejuvenated with Paul's presence and I intend to accept more apprenticeships in the future. I hope that my fellow Fight Masters will consider sharing their talents in apprenticeships as they can be a wonderful learning experience. My hat is off to Paul. He was not only a great student but a wonderful friend as well.

Secondly, I also traveled to Denver to observe Dale Girard teaching at the Denver Center Conservatory. He is presently on probation as a Certified Teacher applicant. Here too, I found a young colleague working diligently to further himself and the Society! He showed me a manuscript he is presently writing on the "single rapier." It was most impressive. The glossary attached to the manuscript, which he has compiled over months, is the most complete glossary of fight terminology that I have witnessed. I told him he must make the glossary available to the membership through **The Fight Master**. He promised he would. But you have here another dedicated student working to improve himself and the Society. It is delightful to see colleagues doing something to enhance our field of endeavor. Instead of being complacent, I would like to recommend that others, like Paul and Dale, get involved with their work, to strive for excellence, and not misrepresent themselves, but rather "earn those spurs" and become an integral part of the Society. I can assure you that the people who make these kinds of efforts will be the leaders in this field in the future. This is a demanding occupation both mentally and physically. Those who explore and continue to learn will be our brightest stars in the years to come. The younger members of the Society will eventually have to pick up the banner, and so we will leave it up to you as to which way this Society will go and how effective a force we will be in the entertainment industry in the future.

David Boushey

A reply to the letter of Michael G. Chin:

It is unfortunate that Mr. Chin found my article "How to Teach Stage Combat to Martial Artists" insulting. It was not my intent to imply that martial artists were either (1) too macho, (2) set in their ways, (3) too stupid or (4) masochistic.

Neither was my intent to condescend to martial artists. I am one. My friends are. The man who proofread the article is my Hwa rang do instructor.

As a stunt coordinator for film, I have worked with many actors trained in the arts and martial artists/cum actors who have not been open enough to take a stage combat seminar.

My article was intended to encourage the hiring of martial artists in fight roles by stressing those parts of the martial artist's background which fit well into our make believe world. It was intended to facilitate communication between those fight directors without a martial arts background and those in the martial disciplines.

It was not intended to insult, and I am sorry if Mr. Chin read it that way.

T. J. Glenn

Dennis L. Graves
-Swordcutler-
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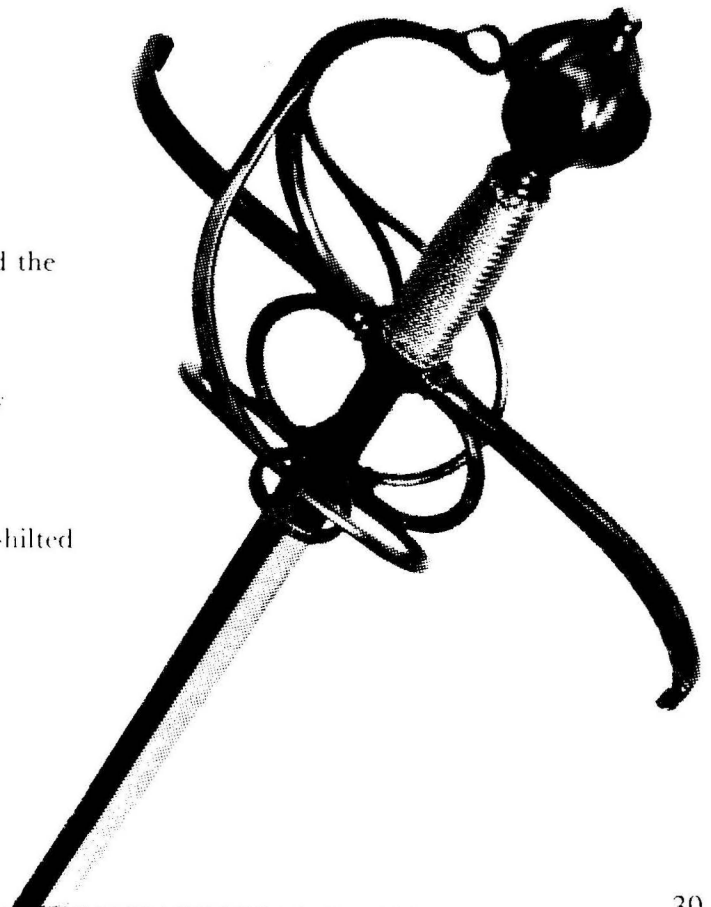
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CERTIFICATIONS

TEMPLE UNIVERSITY

On December 4, 1989, I traveled down the Jersey Turnpike to adjudicate students taught by Mr. Payson Burt. These were graduate students of Acting at Temple University, and I was pleased to note that they receive five semesters of combat training. This is a wonderful gift to the students and reflects the commitment of the faculty. The fights themselves were well staged, safe, and the scenes original. The best fight of the day was by A. Lee Massaro and Laura L. Mitchell, titled "The Affair!" These ladies showed speed, technique, acting, and appropriate Za! While none were recommended, all showed good basic skills and safety awareness. Good job!

Passed:

Mary Beth Scallen
Andrew Powdermaker
Neill Hartley
Ted Rooney
A. Lee Massaro
Laura L. Mitchell

Certified Teacher: **Payson Burt**

Adjudicator: **J. Allen Suddeth**

DENVER

It was my pleasure to adjudicate the students of Dale Girard on December 7th. The test took place in Denver, Colorado. What impressed me the most about the test was the level of safety. The work was extremely safe while still looking very real. The choreography was such that the action was ever present but a sense of "togetherness" was always at hand. It was a wonderful example of combatants working together to present a theatrical event. The rapier and dagger fight was especially good. If there was a down side I guess it would have been the quarterstaff work, but it too was most satisfactory and once again, very safe. It was quite evident that the students appre-

ciated and respected Mr. Girard. It was obviously a close knit group of combatants. I suggested that they not stop here but continue to strive for excellence and the consensus was that they would. We all know fight training does not end with passing the Actor/Combatant Fight Test. On the contrary, it is just the beginning! Well, this was a great beginning and special kudos to Dale for a job well done!

Out of the eleven combatants, ten passed, with four receiving recommendations in one of their required areas. Guy Williams and Gary Hathaway were recommended for their unarmed combat. Greg Gonzales and Dane Torbenson were recommended for their rapier and dagger. The areas covered were unarmed combat, Rapier and dagger and quarterstaff.

Greg Gonzales

Recommended:

Rapier and Dagger

Passed:

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

Eric Brodnax

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

David Czapp

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

David Payne

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

Guy Williams

Recommended:

Unarmed

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Quarterstaff

Gary Hathaway

Recommended:

Unarmed

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Quarterstaff

Michael McClinton

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

Dane Torbenson

Recommended:

Rapier and Dagger

Passed:

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

Kamzlani Ishida

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

Will Obering

Passed:

Rapier and Dagger

Unarmed

Quarterstaff

Instructor: **Dale Girard**

Adjudicator: **David Boushey**

CALIFORNIA INSTITUTE OF THE ARTS

On December 9th I adjudicated ten students at California Institute of the Arts. The combatants were the most proficient and most prepared group I had yet to adjudicate at Cal Arts. I would guess

that all the encouragement and perhaps a little "arm twisting" by Maestro Fredricksen finally took hold. They were a very good group of combatants and it is nice to see this quality of work at Cal Arts. Of the ten that took the test eight passed with two gaining recommendations in all requirements. The areas tested were Rapier and Dagger, Unarmed and Quarterstaff. Another point to acknowledge was the way in which the fights were acted. The acting was excellent and thus the fights were that much more theatrical and exciting to watch.

Hats off to Erik. This is a "team" he can be proud of!

The following combatants passed the test:

Recommended:

Daniel Harper

Jon Beauregard

Passed:

Shannon Kenny

Daniel (Doc) Clement

Daniel Stewart

Selina Foster

Instructor: **Erik Fredricksen**

Adjudicator: **David Boushey**

ACTORS COMBAT TRAINING SCHOOL

On Saturday, May 20, 1989 I adjudicated twelve students taught by J. Allen Suddeth and Richard Raether at the Actors Combat Training School (ACTS) held at the Ken Zen Studio in New York City. Rick Sordelet, Brian Byrnes and Ken Smith also participated in the overall preparation of these students for the Actor/Combatant Fight Test.

John Sellars and Bill Ferrell brought a high element of danger to their fight test while at the same time maintaining a strong sense of safety. Their fights were performed with a brisk tempo, a sense of reckless abandonment, and solid understanding of balance. These gentlemen also benefitted from a longer period of study in all weapon techniques. Although the other fights were satisfactorily executed, I would have liked

to have seen a faster tempo. The slowness in execution often resulted in moments that were anticipated as well as fights lacking the illusion of danger.

The following students passed the Actor/Combatant Fight Test.

Recommended:

John Sellars
Bill Ferrell

Passed:

Robin Flannigan
Jim Gleich
Tito Enriquez
Dan Conroy
Robin Poley
Eileen Merle
Jack Smith
Larry Peterson
Jim Fitzpatrick

Instructors: **J. Allen Suddeth**
Richard Raether
Adjudicator: **David Leong**

Private Study in the Stage Combat Arts

Drew Fracher, Fight Master and Vice President of the Society of American Fight Directors is now offering private study in all forms of stage combat at the Abiding Grace Farm in Harrodsburg, Kentucky. In a retreat atmosphere students work one on one, or in pairs, for up to six hours a day on a curriculum designed to fit the students specific needs. The study of history and practice of personal combat through the ages, as well as an investigation of the techniques of some of Hollywoods most famous choreographers are also included.

Housing and three home grown/home cooked meals a day will be provided. One or two week sessions are available. Two to three months advance notice is needed to schedule sessions and a hundred dollar non-refundable deposit is required. The fee, which does not include transportation, is one thousand dollars per week for individuals or fifteen hundred dol-

lars per week for a pair of students. Fees are negotiable in the event that individuals are interested in doing farm labor or carpentry in trade. Particulars of this type will be worked out on a specific job basis.

Contact Drew Fracher at Abiding Grace Farms, 780 Bushtown Road, Harrodsburg, Kentucky, 40330.

NATIONAL STAGE COMBAT WORKSHOP '90

Duane Orleman is putting the finishing touches on the 1990 National Stage Combat Workshop brochure and many of you should be receiving them in your upcoming mail. I encourage you strongly to reserve you spots early as a sizable enrollment is again anticipated.

This years National Workshop will offer the same classes as in the past with one small variation. Smallsword and quarterstaff will be combined and taught together (one and a half weeks on each weapon) in order to shorten the length of the daily schedule. This will allow more private tutoring in the evening and will also provide participants with more opportunity to rehearse the test fights.

David Boushey will teach unarmed combat with a small unit of time devoted to television and film fighting techniques. Drew Fracher will be teaching smallsword and quarterstaff. Joseph Martinez will teach broadsword and David Leong will teach rapier and dagger.

There are still several spots available for those interested in serving as Assistants or Journeymen. Assistants must be Certified Teachers and Journeymen must be Certified Actor/Combatants. Letters of application should be sent to David S. Leong, 35 West 45th St. Suite 600, New York, New York 10036.

ADVANCE ACTOR/COMBATANT WORKSHOP

The Society of American Fight Directors is pleased to announce a new training program to be held in conjunction with the National Stage

Combat Workshop in 1990. This program is designed for the student who is looking for intensified training, and fills the gap between the Basic Workshop and the Teacher Certification Workshop. It will be offered for the first time at the National Stage Combat Workshop in Las Vegas at the University of Nevada, July 16th to August 3rd 1990.

The classes will be taught by SAFD Fight Masters, and will include advanced techniques in Rapier and Dagger, Smallsword, Broadsword, Quarterstaff and Unarmed. We are considering classes in acting, voice, flips, two on ones, brawls, knife fights, Sword and Shield, Rapier and Buckler, and gun safety. Participants will have the

chance to take the Fight Test, and upgrade their Actor/Combatant Certification for three more years. (Note: All Certificates expire three years from issuance).

Admittance is limited to those students having passed the SAFD Actor/Combatant Fight Test, or by proof of equivalent training. A xerox copy of your Certificate or proof of training must accompany your registration.

We are very excited to be offering this new program, and have named J. Allen Suddeth as the A.A.C.W. coordinator. Any questions should be addressed to: J. Allen Suddeth, 131 Linden Ave., Glen Ridge, NJ 07028.

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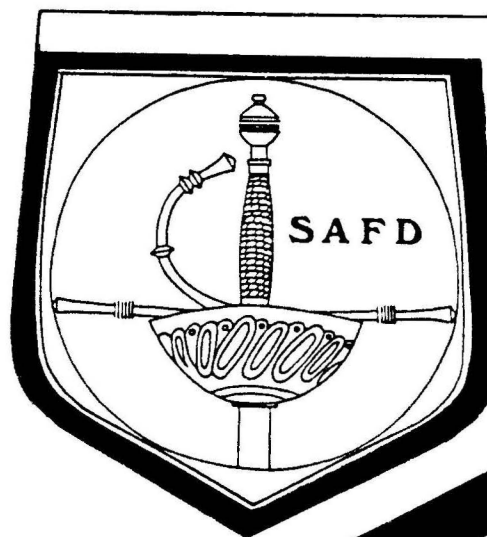
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THE SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

Policy Statement

The Society of American Fight Directors is a national organization devoted to training and improving the quality of stage combat. We are committed to the highest standards of safety in the theatrical, film and television industries. The Society offers educational opportunities across the United States at universities, privately, and at the annual National Stage Combat Workshop, expressly to disseminate this information. The Society of American Fight Directors recognizes individuals in three categories: performers (Actor/Combatants), Teachers of Stage Combat, and Fight Directors. This policy statement is to address and clarify our position.

ACTOR/COMBATANT

The Actor/Combatant is an individual who has received a basic class, or workshop, in three to five weapon forms, and passes a performance test with a minimum number of required moves. This certificate expires three years from the date of issue but is renewable through a re-testing process. This does not qualify this individual to teach stage combat, or to arrange fight scenes. We recognize this person as a safe and competent performer.

CERTIFIED TEACHER

A Certified Teacher of Stage Combat is an individual who has passed the Actor/Combatant Fight Test. This person has extensive educational training and has passed tests in the following areas: teaching techniques, historical styles, weapons theory and practice, and theatrical choreography. We endorse this individual to teach stage combat.

FIGHT MASTER

A Fight Master is an individual who has completed all the requirements of an Actor/Combatant and Certified Teacher. Beyond this, he has an average of twelve years of professional experience, including a minimum of twenty union productions, and must successfully pass an extensive oral, written and practical examination. We endorse this individual to teach, coach and choreograph in professional theatre, film and television and in the academic arena.

The Society of American Fight Directors is the only national organization which has developed recognized standards for levels of skill in the stage Combat Arts. We hope that these guidelines will prove helpful to producers, directors and educators when employing the services of performers, teachers or choreographers of staged violence.

For further information please contact:

Richard Raether, Secretary/Treasurer
1834 Camp Avenue
Rockford, IL 61103
(815) 9622-65769

SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FIGHT DIRECTORS

President	J. Allen Suddeth
Vice President	Drew Fracher
Secretary/Treasurer	Richard Raether
National Workshop Coordinator	David Leong

The Society of American Fight Directors was founded in May, 1977. It is a non-profit organization whose aim is to promote the art of fight choreography as an integral part of the entertainment industry. Members of the Society of American Fight Directors served the entertainment industry by promoting the aesthetics and safety of well-conceived fight choreography.

Inquiries concerning new memberships, status, or change of address should be addressed to the Secretary/Treasurer. Initial membership in the Society of American Fight Directors is \$25.00. Dues for Fight Masters, Certified Teachers, Certified Actor/Combatants and Friends are \$25.00 annually. All membership dues are to be paid in January to the Secretary/Treasurer, Richard Raether, 1834 Camp Ave., Rockford, Illinois 61103.

Applications for change in status within the Society of American Fight Directors should be addressed to the Vice President, Drew Fracher, Abiding Grace Farms, 780 Bushtown Road, Harrodsburg, Kentucky 40330.

FIGHT MASTERS

J.R. Beardsley
761 Colusa Avenue
El Cerrito, California 94530
(415) 526-3755

David Boushey
322 N.W. 175th
Seattle, Washington 98177
(206) 542-1649

Drew Fracher
Abiding Grace Farm
780 Bushtown Road
Harrodsburg, Kentucky 40330
(606) 366-5549

Erik Fredricksen
24724 Apple St.
Newhall, CA 91321
(805) 255-1050

David Leong
35 West 45th Street Suite 600
New York, New York 10036
(212) 382-3535

Joseph Martinez
P.O. Box 1053
Lexington, Virginia 24450
(703) 463-6837

Richard Raether
1834 Camp Avenue
Rockford, Illinois 61103
(815) 962-6579

J. Allen Suddeth
131 Linden Avenue
Glen Ridge, New Jersey 07028
(212) 541-7600

Christopher Villa
1736 Santa Ana Canyon Road
Orange, California 92665
(714) 285-9120

CERTIFIED TEACHERS

Geoffrey Alm
316 North 83rd
Seattle, Washington 98108

Ralph Anderson
370 West 51st St. #5D
New York, New York 10019

Payson Burt
2315 Parrish St.
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19130

Brian Byrnes
100 Bright St. Apt 3
Jersey City, NJ 07302

Dan Carter
Florida State University
School of Theatre
Tallahassee, Florida 32306

Charles Conwell
112 Merlin Road
Phoenixville, Pennsylvania 19460

Dexter Fidler
2233 Grant #18
Berkeley, CA 94703

James Finney
529 Ronalds Street
Iowa City IA 52240

Mark Guinn
2904 South Avenue
Memphis, Tennessee 38111

Richard Lane
761 Colusa
El Cerrito, California 94530

Doug Mumaw
5633 N. Kenmore #82
Chicago, Illinois 60660

Mark Olsen
556 Kling Drive
Dayton, Ohio 45419

Susan Vagedes Eviston
1421 Sleepy Hollow road #7
Fort Wright, KY 41011

Steven Vaughn
800 Vernal Road
Attica, New York 14011

Brad Waller
4404 S. 6th St.
Arlington, Virginia 22202

David Woolley
5633 N. Kenmore # 82
Chicago, Illinois 60660

Jack Young
Department of Drama
Duke University
Durham, North Carolina 27708

REGIONAL REPRESENTATIVES

Chicago, IL
David Woolley/Doug Mumaw
5633 N. Kenmore #82
Chicago, Illinois 60660

San Francisco, CA
Dexter Fidler
2233 Grant St. #18
Berkeley, California 94703

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Department of Drama
Duke University
Durham, NC 27708

Berkeley, CA
Richard Lane
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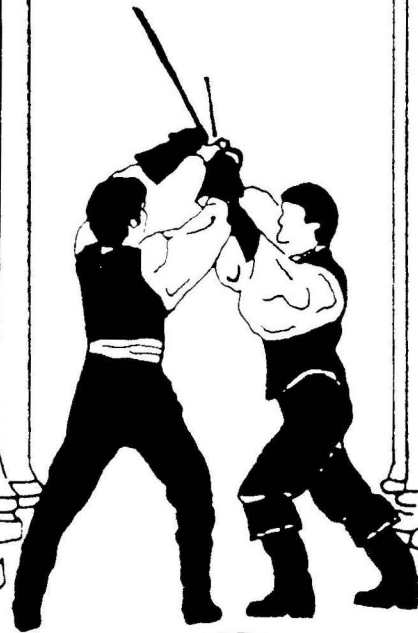
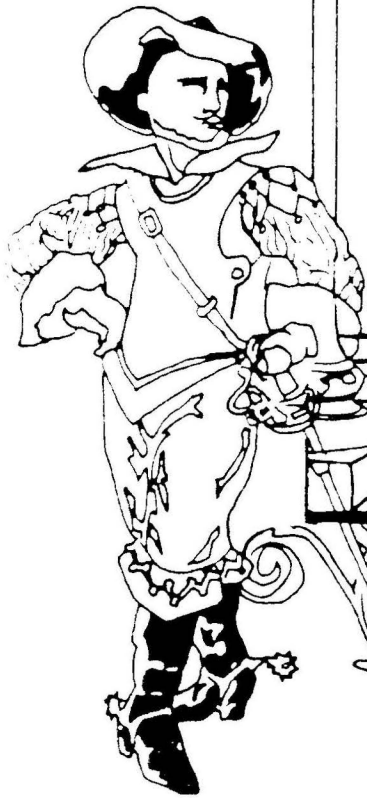
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Susan Vagedes-Eviston
1421 Sleepy Hollow Road #7
Fort Wright, Kentucky 41011

Tallahassee, FL
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Florida State University
School of Theatre
Tallahassee, Florida

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