Integrating Actor Training into Movement Design: An Analysis of the Fight Direction in Tamburlaine and Edward II

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INTEGRATING ACTOR TRAINING INTO MOVEMENT DESIGN: AN ANALYSIS
OF THE FIGHT DIRECTION IN TAMBURLAINE AND EDWARD II

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

by

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Richmond, Virginia
May 2008
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank David Leong and Aaron Anderson.

And I would like to dedicate this thesis to my good friend, and first teacher, Paul Dennhardt.
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Abstract

INTEGRATING ACTOR TRAINING INTO MOVEMENT DESIGN: AN ANALYSIS OF THE FIGHT DIRECTION IN TAMBURLAINE AND EDWARD II

By Christopher Drew Vidal, M.F.A.

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Fine Arts at Virginia Commonwealth University.

Virginia Commonwealth University, 2008

Major Director: David Leong
Chairman, Department of Theatre

The following thesis draws from a recent production assignment at the Shakespeare Theatre Company in Washington, D.C., in which I acted as Associate Fight Director under Broadway Fight Director Rick Sordelet. We worked on three shows in all: William Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew, and Christopher Marlowe’s first play, Tamburlaine, and his last, Edward II. By analyzing and assessing the working methods utilized during this production process, I hope to elucidate the most effective elements, and finally synthesize the tenets of my own working method. Structurally, I will recount the experience chronologically, from preproduction to performance, treating the pros and cons in each section of production.
As a movement designer, I am interested in choreographic methods that both draw organically from actor’s impulses, and integrate acting choices immediately. Too often the acting work is left off until the end; the actors are expected to layer their choices onto a fight that was not choreographed with those choices in mind. Instead, I seek to articulate a working method that allows and guides actors towards physical engagement with specific objectives, and that enables actors to make active choices from the very beginning.

This document was created using Microsoft Word 2000.
Chapter 1

Introduction: Landing the Gig

Nature, that fram'd us of four Elements,
Warring within our breasts for regiment,
Doth teach us all to have aspyring minds:
Our soules, whose faculties can comprehend
The wondrous Architecture of the world,
And measure every wandering plannet's course,
Still climbing after knowledge infinite,
And alwaies mooving as the restles Spheres,
Wils us to weare ourselves, and never rest,
Untill we reach the ripest fruit of all,
That perfect blisse and sole felicitie,
The sweet fruition of an earthly crowne.

- Tamburlaine (II, vi, 869-880)

(Brooke 32)
My first experience with the Shakespeare Theatre Company (hereafter STC) in Washington, DC was as an unpaid assistant to the fight team on *Richard III* during the winter of 2006-2007. My graduate mentor David Leong was the Fight Director, my friend and former teacher Paul Dennhardt was the Assistant Fight Director, and I was the Assistant to the Assistant. Honestly, I forget what my actual title ended up being; it did not matter to me. I was there to help out with anything and everything I could get my hands on, and to get an inside look at how our team, comprised of three generations of students and teachers, would approach staging the full-scale battle that ends the play, a battle that culminated with a fight to the death between the leaders of each army, one of whom is the title character of the play. What made the project even more daunting was the sheer size of it; the theatre had a sizable budget, and some big-name talent on board. It was my first time doing fight work at a LORT theatre.

The experience working on *Richard III* proved to be a successful one. The battle we worked on featured a charging army on horseback, a volley of spears hitting their marks, Richard being strung up in the air, a rope on each limb, and a dynamic sound design built especially for it. It turned out to be a true highlight in the show. My input into the working process was well received by the fight team, and my inclusion into the fight team was well received by the theatre.

After the show was up and running, I was asked by David Leong if I would be interested in assisting him for the STC’s Marlowe Rep coming up the following fall because his long-time assistant, my friend and former teacher Paul Dennhardt, was unable to take the gig.
I leapt at the chance...this next time out, I would be the paid assistant, his right-hand man. Although it was a big break for me, I knew I had big shoes to fill. I had experienced first-hand the many assets that Paul brought to the table, and would have to work doubly hard to provide the same level of expertise he did. But, I had not started the job yet. To get from my acceptance of the job that night, to the rehearsal hall, proved to be more complicated than expected.

Over the next nine months, I maintained a not-so-steady love/hate relationship with what became the tenuous-at-best status of the gig. From the moment I agreed to take the job, to the scheduled date of our first rehearsal, I went on to almost lose the gig, definitely lose the gig, almost get the gig back, not get the gig back, maybe get the gig back, lose the gig again, maybe get the gig back under a different Fight Director, get the gig back under a different Fight Director, and finally, haggle endlessly over contract negotiations with the STC for said gig until, three weeks into rehearsals, I was finally able to sign a contract. It was a tumultuous nine months, and an emotional roller coaster for me. What I did not know at the time, was that the turmoil involved thus far would be a walk in the park compared to what lay ahead.

Eventually, I was contracted as the Assistant Fight Director under veteran Broadway Fight Director Rick Sordelet. I had been sorry to see David leave the project, but also was excited at the prospect of working with someone new, someone who was working at David’s level, but perhaps, and hopefully, taking a different approach. Our charge was to be William Shakespeare’s Taming of the Shrew, and Christopher Marlowe’s Tamburlaine and Edward II.
STC alum and crowd favorite Avery Brooks would be playing the role of Tamburlaine, and the very talented STC alum Wallace Acton would be playing Edward II.

Although the focus of this thesis will be the Marlowe Rep, it is worth noting that our work on *Shrew* was an exceedingly welcome respite from the stress of the other two. Certainly the genre was different, as we were working with comedic, domestic violence, slapstick, and clowning in *Shrew*. The biggest factor though, was simply the environment of the rehearsal hall; the ‘temperature’ in the Rep’s hall was quite a bit hotter. You got the sense that everyone knew the bridge was out ahead, but no one knew how to stop the train.

Four weeks into the rehearsal process, Rick would see to it that my official title be changed to Associate Fight Director, due to our shared discovery that his busy schedule would necessitate far more reliance on me than originally expected. For better or worse, it is this fact that forced me to step into a role of increasing responsibility, and gave me the opportunity to work more closely with all three directors. *Shrew* would be the first to go up, and would be performed in the company’s present space, the Lansburgh. The two Marlowe pieces would be performed in rep by one company, in the new, still-under-construction space, Sydney Harman Hall.

My first contact with Rick had come out of the blue. After David had passed the gig up, and I had resigned myself to having to do the same, I received a phone call from Rick asking me why I had not contacted him yet. This caught me a bit off guard. I had only found out that morning that he was the Fight Director taking David’s place, and honestly, had not considered contacting him. I assumed that with his resume, he had plenty of talented students and colleagues eager and available to assist him with the job.
Lucky for me, it turned out he did not; since he had taken the gig so late in the game, he had no one that could commit to the amount of time needed. And since he would be away from Washington a lot to work on other jobs, he needed an assistant that could be there in his stead fulltime. He proceeded to grill me on the phone for forty-five minutes about both why I wanted the job and why I deserved it, and then told me to send him my materials.

The email I sent twelve hours later contained a two-page cover letter, acting resume, fight resume, curriculum vitae, and the thirty-some pages of supplemental materials I had put together during preproduction. I suspect a phone endorsement from David may have also worked in my favor. Rick called me five minutes after I hit ‘send,’ and I was on the job.
Chapter 2  
Christopher Marlowe: A Brief History

"Marlowe lived a far sexier life than Shakespeare […] [Shakespeare] was a dorky little actor who wanted to be a major player, and Marlowe was the cooler kid who showed up in London at the age of 23 and took the town by storm. Everyone wanted to be him."

- Akiva Fox, Literary Associate at the Shakespeare Theatre, quoted by Jayne Blanchard in her November 9, 2007 Washington Times article Bad Boy Marlowe On A Tear

Christopher Marlowe was born in Canterbury in 1564, the same year William Shakespeare was born (Hopkins 1). In 1593, at the young age of twenty-nine, he was found dead. Some speculate that his death stemmed from a drunken brawl or disputed bar tab, while others say it was the result of a calculated murder by a literary contemporary, or government assassin (Hopkins 4). Still others assert that he had been enticed to the docks for a rendezvous with a young male prostitute which ended in violence over the payment owed (Wilson 22). Perhaps he faked the whole thing and resurfaced later as William Shakespeare…it is a mystery that may never be solved. A few days after his mysterious death, a document appeared labeling him an atheist and a homosexual, among other things (Goldberg 54).
Marlowe’s reputation as a transgressive, and his reported involvement with a dissident group of thinkers that called themselves the School of Night, which included Sir Walter Raleigh, may not have contributed to his popularity. His final years at Cambridge are also the subject of fascinating debate, as it is widely documented that the lengthy absences he took from school during this time were due to his involvement in government business…more specifically, espionage (Hopkins 38). *Tamburlaine* was Marlowe’s first play; *Edward II* was his last.

Shortly after leaving Cambridge in 1587, Marlowe brought the first part of *Tamburlaine* to London looking to have it produced (Fox). It became an immediate hit, and the second part was released soon after in response to the popularity of the first; the two were probably written in 1587 and 1588 respectively (Geckle 15). The play chronicled the exploits of Timur the Lame, a fourteenth century Mongol conqueror who rose from the lowly ranks of a shepherd to become a great leader of men, and a ruthless general of war. The first records of the play in performance are from 1594-1595; then strangely, there is no record until 1919, when the Yale University Dramatic Association produced it for their annual commencement (Geckle 47). The production that seems to be known best to modern audiences is Tyrone Guthrie’s unsuccessful, 1956 American restaging of his 1951 Old Vic production (Geckle 52). This production only ran for two-and-a-half weeks on Broadway, but in that short time, a young Michael Kahn (who would later become the STC’s Artistic Director) saw it and was enthralled. The other *Tamburlaine* production of note is Peter Hall’s 1976-1977 production at the National Theatre in London (Geckle 57).
So, why has the play not been tackled more often? Mark Burnett suggests that the play often leaves audiences in a similar position to Tamburlaine’s captives - “a stunned, perplexed, or ambiguous state” (Cheney 142). Reviewer Tim Treanor called the play “curiously linear.” My biggest criticism is that structurally, the piece is extremely repetitive. The pattern of obstacle/bravado/success/new obstacle gets repeated a few too many times.

Edward II was reportedly written in 1591 (Geckle 33). Historically, the reign of Edward II was indeed a disaster, so it made ideal source material. Since Marlowe himself was reportedly homosexual, and a free-thinking atheist, the ties between him and his protagonist Edward are ample. The play chronicles the relationship between the ineffectual King Edward II and his lowborn lover Gaveston. The kingdom’s nobles, as well as Edward’s wife Isabella, do not support the tryst, and it, along with Edward’s utter lack of desire to be a ruler at all, eventually bring about his downfall. The play’s subject matter made it unproduceable for the nearly three hundred years between the Restoration in 1660 and the twentieth century, even though it was regarded by critics as Marlowe’s best work.

In the short time between the two plays, Marlowe matured immensely as a playwright. The complexity of thought that the speakers in Edward II exhibit is a vast departure from the often declamatory structure of Tamburlaine. Michael Toscano’s review of the Rep addressed this very point. Referencing the STC production of Tamburlaine, he said, “[i]ts flaws highlight how much Marlowe's work evolved in the five years between Tamburlaine and Edward II.”
I cannot help but wonder what Marlowe would have written next, had his short career not come to an abrupt end...but what a fitting combination for a rep, a playwright’s first play, and his last.
Chapter 3

Preproduction with David Leong

But what are kings, when regiment is gone,

But perfect shadowes in a sun-shine day?

- Edward II (2012-2013)

(Brooke 367)

Our preproduction work session began a few months before the first rehearsal was scheduled; we carved out three weeks of time in the middle of the hot and humid Richmond summer. We had the following goals in mind for each play: to fully understand the stories and be able to state them in our own words as briefly as possible, to compose violence plots that included any moments we might be called upon to address, to research the worlds of the plays, and to generate ideas for how to approach specific battles. Included in these work sessions were myself, Fight Director David Leong, and another graduate student, Diego Villada.

We began with Tamburlaine, as it was by far the most complicated in terms of our contribution; essentially, the entire play alternately took place right before a battle, during a battle, or right after a battle. I came to our first meeting equipped with a short synopsis for each scene, and what action, if any, was inferred to have occurred in between them.
Even though the working draft the STC provided us called for only two battles to appear on stage, we knew we would most likely be called upon in many other situations in which battles were occurring right off stage. Often too, the space between scenes necessitated some passage of time in or around a battle, and thusly, we ended up addressing far more moments than the first rehearsal draft called for.

We worked as follows: first, I would share the synopsis, as simply and briefly as possible, and then Diego and I would divide up the parts and read the scenes aloud while David listened. This working method, David shared, was one he borrowed from Joanne Akalaitis, and adapted for his own use. He told us that she usually had a team of assistants to read and explain the play to her. Having to put the story in our own words gave us a much better understanding of it. For David, being able to sit back while the story was unfolded to him, enabled him to really listen to the scenes without having to try to play or decipher the text. He would pose questions to us whenever something in the story was unclear, which we learned was plenty often in Tamburlaine. We would move forward only when all three of us were in agreement about the scene and plotline, and could articulate it.

As the story became clearer to the three of us, we set about work on the battles themselves. Diego began creating a set of ‘family trees’ that detailed who every character was and how they were related. David asked me to go through the entire script, and write down every possible detail about the warfare, from the extrinsic information gathered from dialogue, to the intrinsic minutiae inferred. This included, but was not limited to, location, time of day, weather conditions, size of armies, armor and dress, weaponry, and tactics.
Every word in the script that described any part of a battle became a clue for us, and supplemented the historical research I was doing on the life of the real Tamburlaine, fourteenth century Mongol conqueror Timur the Lame. I discovered that Marlowe penned a lot of what I came to call ‘bravado scenes’ – scenes in which characters went back and forth talking about how great their armies were and how said armies were going to slaughter the opposing armies. The good news for me, and potentially bad news for fidgety audience members four months down the road, was that there was no shortage of these thematically repetitive scenes in Tamburlaine. The script was full of rich details about the warfare, as well as explicit and implicit stage directions.

The following passages come from C.F. Tucker Brooke’s 1929 volume of Marlowe works:

A thousand horsmen? We five hundred foote? / An ods too great, for us to stand against […]. (I, ii, 317-318)

Their plumed helms are wrought with beaten golde, / Their swords enameld, and about their neckes / Hang massie chains of golde downe to the waste […]. (I, ii, 320-322)
Our quivering Lances, shaking in the aire, / And bullets, like Jove’s dreadfull
Thunderbolts, / Enrolde in flames and fiery smouldering mistes, / Shall threat the
Gods more than Cyclopian warres; / And with our Sun-bright armour, as we march,
/ Weel chase the Stars from heaven, and dim their eies. (II, iii, 616-621)

Besides fifteene contributorie kings / Hath now in armes ten thousand janissaries /
Mounted on lusty Mauritanian steeds. (III, iii, 1112-1113)

[…] King Sigismond hath brought from Christendome / More than his Camp of
stout Hungarians, / Sclavonians, German horsemen, Swiss and Danes, / That with
the Holberd, Lance, and murthering Axe, / Will hazard that we might with surety
hold. (I, i, 2345-2349)

The following passages come from the STC performance draft:

Yield not and see that our artillery / Shall play upon the bulwarks of thy hold
Volleys of ordnance, till the breach be made […]. (II, xa, 16-19)

Soldiers, bring forth the battering ram, / And with the breach’s fall, smoke, fire, and
dust, / The crack, the echo, and the soldiers’ cry / Make deaf the air and dim the
crystal sky. (II, xa, 33-36)
Hang him in chains in sight of all the town, / And let my soldiers shoot the slave to death. (II, xv, 81-82)

The final portion of our script analysis involved coming up with preliminary storyboards for the battles. This meant being able to write out the story and progression of each battle in simple prose, detailing entrances and exits, along with what category the various action fell into, be it a duel, fight, battle, skirmish, crossover, or alarum. I broadly defined these categories of action as such:

**Alarum**  Sound cue used during a battle that conveys some new information, such as victory, defeat, arrival, or retreat.

**Crossover**  Traveling phrase that contains an objective related to the fight or battle, but no actual combat.

**Skirmish**  Short, traveling exchange of combat.

**Duel**  Fight between two combatants that adheres to certain, very particular, rules of engagement.

**Fight**  Exchange of combat between a small group of combatants, with a potentially narrower focus.

**Battle**  Longer exchange with more combatants, and a broader focus.

**Brawl**  Unorganized and non-militaristic fight involving two or more groups of combatants.
Eventually, within these broad categories of action, we would also need to discover a hook for each of the scenes, fights, and battles we would be treating. The definition of a hook had always been somewhat more obtuse to me. I thought of it as a specific idea or approach that would affect every choice the characters made…something tied inextricably to the story and given circumstances. However, we still had a significant amount of preparatory work to complete before we would be ready to discover the hooks.

Shape came next…bearing in mind all the clues from the text, and the stories we wanted to tell, we began to figure out what the shapes of the battles might be. A retreat looks and feels very different from an even match, or a slaughter, just as a duel looks and feels very different from a match on the battle field. And a regimented and experienced military battalion fights differently than a hungry, desperate band of thieves. Tamburlaine’s army begins the play as proud marauders, and finishes it as the largest and most feared army in the world. We needed to discover how these factors affected the tactics, shape, and execution of each battle. Whenever scenes occurred amidst a battle, we began to figure out how we might fill in that action around the scene without detracting from it. Without ever discussing the actual, technical combat that would occur, we got as specific as possible about the shape and feel of the story that needed to emerge.

Once we had gotten deep into our homework on the story behind each battle, it was finally time to get up on our feet. We began experimenting with a number of different styles, weapons, and conventions for the fights themselves. We had a hunch we might be outfitting armies with pole arms of some kind, so we began there.
With the help of two other friends and colleagues, Maggie Marlin and Robert Wesley, we first set out choreographing katas, or phrases of moves against an imaginary opponent. We choreographed short katas, and long katas, some with sound, and some without; we performed them solo, with partners, and in groups. Lead by David’s eye on the outside, we were searching for what would become our physical vocabulary for the world of the play…for what conventions we would settle on to tell the stories of the battles and violence. Next, we began choreographing actual phrases of combat, for different sizes and styles of pole arm. One of our first resources was given to us by David. It was a book called *The Deity and the Sword* by Risuke Otake, and it detailed combat with the Japanese naginata, a staff with a curved blade on the end, and the Japanese katana, a long, curved sword sharpened on one side. As with our initial script work, David would give us a specific project, and then observe our work and comment on what might be effective for the world of our play.

We tried quite consciously not to limit our exploration in any way…at this point, anything was still possible. One of the more abstract tools we experimented with was weighted flags – rectangular pieces of lightweight fabric with small bearings sewn into one corner. The play talks a lot about the color of Tamburlaine’s army, and how it changes from white, to red, to black as the situation for his enemy becomes dire. We were interested in discovering a martial way to incorporate this plot point into our work.
The following passage is from the STC performance draft:

The first day when he pitcheth down his tents, / White is their hue, and on his silver
crest / A snowy feather spangled-white he bears, / To signify the mildness of his
mind, / That, satiate with spoil, refuseth blood: / But when the dawn appears the
second time, / As red as scarlet is his furniture; / Then must his kindled wrath be
quench’d with blood, / Not sparing any that will not disarm: / But, if these threats
move not submission, / Black are his colours, black his tents; / His spear, his shield,
his horse, his armour, plumes, / And jetty feathers, menace death and hell; /
Without respect of sex, degree, or age, / He razeth all his foes with fire and sword.
(I, xi, 23-37)

In addition to the above references to color, the script refers to fire, bullets, and arrows.
While exploring different ways to theatrically convey some of these elements, David had
come across the weighted flags online, and a few days later, a set of them, along with an
instructional video on their use, appeared at our doorstep. We used the flags as swords,
arrows, shields, blood, fire, banners, and anything else we could think of. Diego and I
received plenty of good-natured snickering as people observed us rehearsing our
synchronized flag-dance routines along with the instructional video. Whether or not they
would make it into the show, no one knew or cared. They opened up our dialogue on how
to create the language of our battles.
We were about a week into preproduction when David began sharing with us the tenuous nature of his contract negotiation. Our conversations about the show began to be tempered by David’s insistence that our department should have been in discussion with the director and other designers at the STC much sooner. Nonetheless, we kept in good spirits and proceeded full speed ahead. I honestly did not really consider the possibility that David would not reach an agreement with the theatre. I naively assumed that the difficulties David was describing were standard practice. Perhaps he was exaggerating in order to craft a teachable moment? Obviously, this was all wishful thinking on my part. We were two weeks in when the news came that the project was a no-go, and we halted work. We had managed to get a considerable amount of work done on Tamburlaine, but never did begin work on Edward II. It would be another six weeks before a phone call from Fight Director Rick Sordelet would renew my hopes, and continue the Marlowe coaster.
Chapter 4

Day 1 Workshop with Rick Sordelet

[M]y customs are as peremptory
As wrathful planets, death, or destiny.
- Tamburlaine (V, ii, 1908-1909)
  (Brooke 60)

I was unable to meet Rick in person until the moment he showed up about a week-and-a-half into the rehearsal process. Up until that point, I had been attending all rehearsals, and relaying whatever pertinent information I collected back to him. His first morning in town, after his customary four dollar plate of French toast at a greasy dive a block from the rehearsal hall, Rick lead an ensemble-building workshop for the entire company. Besides being a fun icebreaker, it provided the company with a working, physical vocabulary for how to approach heightened moments in the rehearsal hall. The principles this initial work presented were very similar to those inherent in my own mentor David Leong’s contemporary violence work. Both utilize highly structured, contact improvisation exercises to get actors working and breathing together, and listening physically. Detailed below is Rick’s working order for that first workshop, followed by a more detailed explanation of each step:
1. Space Work
2. 180’s and Reverse 180’s
3. Hugs
4. Never-Ending Hugs
5. Duos/Groups/Interruptions
6. Hair Pull/Choke/Face Mash
7. Leader-Follower (Elbow and Head)
8. Ground Work/Grappling
9. Capture the Flag (or Person)
10. Lifts/Carries
11. Spear Work/Phalanxes

Rick began the workshop by circling the entire company, and then shaking hands with each of them as he introduced himself and repeated their names back to them. He then cracked a few jokes…actually a great many jokes…and we were off.

**Space Work**

The space work that began the workshop was very straightforward; it mainly was designed to get the blood pumping, and the company seeing and reacting to one another. The only variable that Rick tinkered with was tempo. As the company moved throughout the room, he instructed them to make eye contact with those they passed, and to maintain one group tempo.
He then asked that the tempo slowly increase, until the company was at a light jog, and then decreased it again back to a brisk walk. Essentially, those were the only instructions. The additional coaching Rick provided did not add objectives or new instructions, but instead served only to make the company more aware of the work they were already doing. Some examples included asking that they fill the space, maintain awareness of one another, listen closely to the sounds of their footsteps, and share brief connections with those they passed.

**180’s and Reverse 180’s**

When participants heard ‘180,’ they immediately had to turn one hundred eighty degrees over their right shoulders; a reverse ‘180’ went over the left shoulder. These basic instructions slowly incorporated working the brain and the body at the same time. The participants that still were not fully present had to wake up. I got the impression that many of the participants began to try to guess what Rick would call out next. The simple act of preparing oneself for either command heightened everyone’s awareness, and brought them closer to a state of readiness.

**Hugs**

The hugs were incorporated after each ‘180.’ Rick instructed the company to hug the first person they saw after completing a turn, and then resume moving. This segment functioned to get the company accustomed to touching each other.
Even with seasoned professionals in the room, the first instruction to touch another person met with giggles and chitchat. It was quite entertaining to see some of the ‘adults’ have to swallow their pride some, and refind how to play. I learned quite a bit about the company by observing this seemingly inconsequential, and yet formative, segment of the work.

**Never-Ending Hugs**

This was the element of the workshop that most closely echoed my own mentor David Leong’s contemporary violence work. The Never-Ending Hug exercise is Rick’s version of an exercise that David calls Water Meets Water. Both are contact improvisation exercises that can be used for a variety of theatrical uses, from warming up, to building ensemble, to generating choreography. In Water Meets Water, two participants work together, one with the objective to leave, and the other with the objective not to let him/her do so. With the Never-Ending Hug, Rick asks two participants to give each other a hug, but one person does not let go, while the other attempts escape. It is a slow, contact improvisation exercise, in which one person’s objective is to escape, and the other’s is not to let them. As I observed, I witnessed all communication quickly break down. The participants instinctually wanted to fight, or perhaps thought they were supposed to be fighting, so they immediately began to work against each other instead of with. They continually had to be coached to take it slow, listen to one another, and work together. At the start of this segment, Rick only allowed participants to work with each partner briefly. He would then break them, ask them to shake hands and say thank you, and continue the space work…then another ‘180,’ and a new partner.
As everyone became more comfortable with the exercise, Rick announced that there was no longer any time limit to a duo’s work session, and encouraged everyone to spend more time with each partner. He no longer instructed them when to switch; the decision making was handed over to the participants.

**Interruptions/Groups**

Next, Rick introduced the physical vocabulary necessary for interrupting a duo at work. A third person could now intercede, push two people apart, and continue working with one of them. This inevitably began to create moments when three or more people were working at a time. At first, the participants were instructed always to be working towards a single partnership, but as the work progressed, it became harder and harder to do so. Eventually, Rick coached the participants to fully allow and explore the moments of larger group connection that were naturally occurring. These moments were the precursors to the larger, group improvisations that would occur later.

**Hair Pull/Face Mash**

The hair pull and face mash techniques became a part of the mix quite swiftly, without an excess amount of time spent on how-to, which I greatly appreciated. To make the hair pull safe, Rick asked the company to ‘cradle’ the head. This meant finding points of contact besides the point of violence. He did not over-explain; he asked only that everyone stay safe, and start slow. This allowed the company to figure things out for themselves, and kept the workshop from turning into a stage combat class.
The hair pull and face mash just became added physical vocabulary for the Never-Ending Hug exercise. I noticed with the face mash, that the simple act of contorting a person’s face quite easily created the illusion of pain. When one person puts another’s face into a position that is impossible through one’s own musculature, the audience reads pain whether there is any or not. I believe a similar phenomenon sometimes occurs with sound. Certain body knaps on grabbing and pushing techniques do not actually hurt; however, the knap conveys more dramatic weight in terms of potential violence.

**Leader/Follower (Elbow and Head)**

We then switched gears slightly to address ‘man-handling’- giving off the illusion that one person is forcefully in control of another. To do this, Rick began with one person leading another around by the point of his/her elbow. Once everyone was comfortable with the elbow, he switched the point of contact to the back of the head, at the base of the skull. Switching from the elbow to the head effectively raised the stakes. The comedy that ensued from the elbow work disappeared when we switched to the head, replaced with what began to look like violence. Initially, I observed many examples of people leading themselves around, and not receiving the physical suggestion to move from his/her partner. This exercise, more so than the Never-Ending Hug exercise, made it easy to spot these moments. The part of this segment that caused duos the most trouble was the point of release; many participants experienced difficulty in cuing an end point. Again, you could really tell which groups were physically listening to each other by observing this particular moment.
Ground Work/Grappling

Up until this point, the progression of exercises had maintained a fairly constant and manageable learning curve. Asking the company to go to the ground changed that dramatically. This segment was the same Never-Ending Hug game, but with the caveat that the groups move to, and then stay on, the floor. Getting themselves to the ground while partnering proved to be quite a challenge for much of the company. To their credit, they dove right in. It occurred to me that it may have been useful to get them to the floor on their own earlier in the progression of exercises. However, in keeping with the spirit of many of the exercises, the workshop took an unexpected, and possibly challenging, leap just when the participants were feeling secure. This element of the workshop’s progression worked favorably, and kept the company challenged, and thinking on their toes. Rick had a very solid grasp on when to stick with an exercise, and when and how to move past it.

Capture the Flag (or Person)

The initial Never-Ending Hug exercise now continued in a different manifestation. Rick divided the company into two groups with opposing objectives. One person stood his/her ground in the middle of the room, while each of the two larger groups moved to opposite perimeters of the space. The objective for both groups was to capture the person in the middle. I was impressed to see that after only sixty minutes of work, everyone had the common, physical vocabulary needed to attack this exercise.
Each time the exercise was attempted, and without any outside suggestions, a completely different story developed. This segment of Rick’s progression is one that I have borrowed and adapted for my own use with much success. Once students or participants have an understanding of the physical groundwork, it is simple to add many different obstacles and parameters that provide an endless array of structures for group improvisation. The addition of more given circumstances begins to move the improvisations from open-ended play, towards generation of repeatable action. I often supply a specific beginning and ending scenario, and then allow the participants to improvise within a structure to discover the middle. The scenarios can continue to get more specific and complex, and can move towards the world of the play. Some of the ideas and images that were generated through the improvisations in Rick’s workshop did turn up on stage, consciously or unconsciously.

**Lifts/Carries**

Now that the entire company was working together, Rick incorporated the lifting and carrying of a single participant. Again, proper technique was not discussed. The only instructions were that sensitive parts be treated with respect, and that everyone involved stay connected with the group whether or not they had a hand on the person being lifted. A single participant would stand his/her ground, or lie flat on the floor, and the rest of the company would pick the person up, move him/her to a different spot in the space, and then set the person down in the same position that he/she started in. Variations for the group with the body included moving backwards and forwards, in circles, quickly and slowly, and with different qualities such as reverence, scorn and joy.
The company had great fun with this segment. It was as if they were elated to finally have one common objective for the entire group.

**Spear Work/Phalanxes**

This was the final segment of the workshop. We outfitted the company with wooden spears (from *Richard III* nonetheless), and divided them into two opposing armies preparing to charge each other. The only instructions were to keep the spear points up and away from faces, and maintain a slow pace. For the most part, the rules of the game again remained the same, the only difference being the spears. The armies were to charge each other, and anyone ‘killed’ was to lie down, while the ‘survivors’ were to continue to the opposite wall. Without any prompting from Rick, the company developed their own vocabulary of moves for the spears. Participants gently stabbed and cut and pushed each other with the spears, and we just reminded everyone to keep faces safe and clear.

In all, we worked for just under two hours. I spent about half of the workshop observing and helping to facilitate, and the other half participating. Since this was my first experience with Rick, I wanted to observe his interactions with the group. However, if someone was in need of a partner, or having difficulties, I would jump in and participate. One of the points Rick stressed as we wrapped up was that actors need to have the physical vocabulary and emotional freedom to play heightened moments in the rehearsal hall when a Fight Director is not present. This resonated greatly with me, since a Fight Director’s time with a cast is often so limited.
It can be detrimental to scene work to not physicalize a moment if that is what needs to happen. That being said, it is not essential that this physicalization be the ‘thing;’ it just needs to be a ‘thing.’ The script may call for a slap as the climax of an argument. At that point, words are no longer adequate to convey the character’s needs, so physical action is taken. In the rehearsal hall, that ‘thing’ does not have to be a slap right away…it can be a push or a grab or a psychological gesture…so long as the actor embodies it fully and does not shy away from the moment because he/she does not yet have the technical know-how to execute a slap. The slap can always be added later. Rick’s workshop provided the company with some tools for physicalizing moments, and raised their confidence level in terms of using these tools with each other.
Chapter 5

Choreographing the Fights

“War is hell, but it can look pretty snazzy onstage.”

- Celia Wren from her October 28, 2007 Washington Post article on the violence in Tamburlaine

One of the first obstacles that we knew we would have to address was how to make each of the battles unique. It was clear to both of us right away that we could not hope to use realistic combat for all of the battles, if any at all. I recalled some of David Leong’s input on this matter, which had stuck with me long after he had left the project. He had said that all violence on stage was stylized in some way, because the theatre is a suggestive, not a realistic, medium. Some theatre may consciously approach realism or naturalism, but it cannot hope to arrive because the audience knows that there are real people on stage. Even though we had a sizable cast to work with, upwards of forty actors, we could not hope to realistically convey seven hundred thousand men on horseback charging down a mountain into two hundred thousand archers; the numbers the script called for were unbelievably large. To convey that, we would have to return to the story we wanted to tell, and find the essence of it within our group.
One of Rick’s greatest strengths was thinking and working quickly on his feet. He seemed to take joy in being a problem solver, and made it his business to foster a relationship with every person in the room, especially the non-actors. He offered a lot of compliments, gave a lot of pep talks, and effortlessly encouraged people to talk about themselves. He always came to rehearsal with a pallet of ideas to draw from, but nothing set in stone. He seemed to do almost all of his decision making in the rehearsal hall. I heard him allude to his work in television as one of the reasons he works fast; he has been the stunt coordinator for the soap opera *Guiding Light* for some time. I believe this to be a strength he developed also due to how full he keeps his schedule. He already had a full work load before he signed on to do the Marlowe Rep.

Early in the process, when we were having our first go at the major moments, Rick and I did not do much discussing ahead of time. I would fill him in on everything I had witnessed in prior rehearsals, as well as what input the director had shared about the scene, and then he would joke that none of that mattered a bit, because we were going to do our own thing. Of course it did matter…I saw the joking as Rick’s way of impressing upon me that the director was not going to bully our department in any way. Simply put, he wanted them to let him do his job.

Detailed next are the main moments in each show that our department treated, listed in chronological order. For most of these, the brief treatment of them is not intended to give the reader an exhaustive description of either the end products or the process by
which they were reached. Instead, it is meant to provide a basic working knowledge of both the volume and variety of violence our department tackled.

The two exceptions to this will be the Cosroe Battle from *Tamburlaine*, and the Dock Fight from *Edward II*. Each of these major moments posed a particular challenge for us, and the analyses of them will look more closely at the specifics of their creation, from the drawing board to the stage.

**TAMBURLAINE**

**Hijacking**

The hijacking of Zenocrate’s wagon was the first violence in the show. As her train made their way slowly from upstage left to downstage right, Tamburlaine’s merry band of thieves descended from ladders, burst out of the floor, and surrounded the wagon, subduing her protectors, and ransacking her goods. It was the audience’s first introduction to Tamburlaine…part of our job was to present his gang as somewhat untrained and unorganized in order to give ourselves room to transform them into the most feared and powerful army in the world.

**Spear Slaughter**

The first militaristic violence of the show, it was essentially a large skirmish between Tamburlaine’s army and Mycetes’ army. The effect was a retreat that quickly turned into a slaughter. Five soldiers sprinted on from off stage right, and then turned to
face the greater force chasing them with spears. The ensuing combat traveled quickly to off stage left, with the entering force laying waste to those they chased. Some of the victims stumbled off on their own, while others were forced off on the ends of the aggressor’s spear points. The entire fracas was witnessed by the cowardly King Mycetes, who ran and hid upstage when the soldiers entered.

**Cosroe Battle**

This was our only full-scale, ‘traditional’ stage combat battle – less stylization and more ‘slash-and-bash.’ As opposed to the brief, retreating slaughter that preceded it, it was to be a longer, more evenly matched battle. The script informs the audience that Tamburlaine’s army is in fact greatly outnumbered, but even so, he refuses to attack Cosroe’s force without making his intentions known, and providing Cosroe with more troops. This battle also would be the main vehicle for the audience to see Tamburlaine fighting. The actor, Avery Brooks, obviously had plenty on his plate besides this fight, so our goal was to make him look as good as possible in as short a time as possible. We knew that what we got from him on day one probably would not change much during rehearsal, so we needed to find the fight that he could do well *now*.

The battle began as mayhem, as the two armies charged at each other; Cosroe’s force was already holding the up right corner, and Tamburlaine’s army spilled out of the middle left door unit, creating a bit of a bottleneck. Eventually, the ‘camera’ focused in on the fight going on between the leaders of each army, as the action going on around Cosroe and Tamburlaine faded into the background. The audiences’ eyes continually were
directed to our principles center stage, as the rest of the battle swirled around them. This was accomplished both spatially, and with lighting.

As the battle continued to shift in Tamburlaine’s favor, the wounded or dispatched enemy troops faded off stage, and Tamburlaine’s troops closed in to see their leader besting Cosroe in single combat. The battle then ended with a bear-baiting phrase in which the generals of Tamburlaine’s army took turns cutting the wounded and battle-weary Cosroe. Lights and staging continued to effectively provide a close-up at the end as the attention became focused downstage center on Tamburlaine and Cosroe alone.

During the initial rehearsals for this battle, Rick and I saved time by sharing the responsibility of generating the actual moves. He would make sure we were both clear on what needed to happen, and then he would work with one group of combatants while I tackled another. In general, he knocked out stage left, and the single combat at center, and I knocked out stage right. We constantly had to stand back to monitor whether enough focus was being directed at the two leaders at center. While the primary focus was on them, a number of secondary focal points shifted to the fights going on with Tamburlaine’s generals, Theridamas, Techelles and Usumcasane. We tried to time these out so each general flashed into a brief primary focus at least once. As we discussed and crafted where the audience was looking at every moment, I found myself consistently coming back to the cinema analogy...our battle contained an establishing shot, close-ups, pan-outs, and jump-cuts. The cinema analogy works well because the movie vocabulary speaks to exactly what the audience is seeing.
I would have liked to work more closely with the Sound Designer. The battle was set to music, however the music functioned more as atmosphere than as story.

**Flag Battle**

This very stylized battle was between Tamburlaine’s army and the Sultan Bajazeth’s army. It was one of our fights that wound up on the cutting room floor. It may have worked with the right technical elements, but Director Michael Kahn and Assistant Director Stephen Fried had a hard time visualizing it. They said it reminded them of marching bands, which there was some truth in. Rick fought for the concept initially, but let it go when we decided together that the scene did not need any violence. It ended up being more effective to watch the actors see the violence unfolding on the fourth wall. The original concept involved each combatant having a rectangular standard on the end of a pole arm, with a different colored crest on each side. As the armies clashed, the standards of the losing army would be flipped around so the victorious army’s crest now appeared. We discovered early-on that the effect would depend upon more light hitting the standards, and less hitting the mass of actors below. In full light, the marching actors looked like automatons. I would have liked to have seen if we could have pulled it off with the right technical elements in place.

**Catfight**

This short scuffle between four women did its job, but had the potential to be much more. It was added late in the process, at which point we had far bigger fish to fry. Also,
the actresses involved did not seem too interested in committing to the violence. They seemed to be humoring us and the director, and ultimately, it showed.

**Siege of Damascus (a.k.a. the Virgin Slaughter)**

This battle made use of the audience’s imagination to great effect. The only on stage deaths were the three virgins, each of whom was dispatched by a group of Tamburlaine’s soldiers wielding spears. However the mayhem was staged in such a way that the audience could picture more carnage happening just out of view. This was accomplished by creating lines of attack that traveled quickly towards off stage, escalating in energy as they went. As the exiting combatants disappeared from view, they were all in mid-action. What appeared to the audience was a frantic, scrambling retreat from a ruthless, stronger force ordered to spare no one.

**Bajazeth’s and Zabina’s Brainings**

These two suicides were a particular challenge, both technically, and story-wise. The script called for the Sultan and his wife to ‘brain’ themselves on the cage that held them. We were not sure at first how to craft the moments so that they might be the most theatrically arresting. We played with a single, self-inflicted strike, and then with many. Initially, I was concerned that many strikes may read wrong, and get a laugh. Also compounding the difficulty of these moments was the issue of blood. Director Michael Kahn very much wanted a blood effect, which we were happy oblige him with. The actor playing the role of Bajazeth was not as keen on it. We used a stomp pad, with a hose
traveling up the cage bar to the point of imagined contact. Since the illusion we created was that the captive rammed his forehead into the bar, the blood gag was delivered to that point, and as such, the actor had to contend with blood getting in his eyes. To help alleviate this, we put a layer of Vasaline over his eyes. Unfortunately, due to the sheer size of the theatre, and the stage position of the cage unit, the blood only read to the first twenty or so rows. In addition, the actor, who had been doing a superb job of selling the moment before we added the blood gag, never quite re-found the physical commitment to the act that he started with…you could see him thinking about the gag.

The sound effect also was problematic. We explored having the actor provide it himself, as well as having a crew member provide it just off stage. We settled on the latter, as the actor had plenty on his plate, what with playing the scene and operating the blood delivery. Approximating the sound of a human head repeatedly bashing itself against an iron bar is harder than you might imagine, and the sound effect never quite worked in my opinion. All in all, it seemed like a whole lot of trouble for a relatively small payout.

**Christins/Muslims**

This battle also ended up on the cutting room floor, which was too bad, because it was one of the strongest fights we had. Spatially, it was unique, as we had the Muslims laying siege to the up center tower as the Christians spilled out of it. Also, the Christians were armed with a very different set of weapons than any other group in the play. It was unfortunate to have to lose all the broadswords, halberds, and shields. Nonetheless, the cut
was in the best interest of the show, as it eliminated an entire plotline that was fairly extraneous to Tamburlaine’s journey.

**Calyphas Stabbed**

Tamburlaine murdered the most effeminate and least warlike of his three sons in front of his most recent captives, his own generals, and his other two sons. We faced the son almost completely upstage, and used the horrified reactions of the characters facing downstage to complete the audience’s perception of the event. The effect created was that Tamburlaine inserted the knife into his boy’s belly, below the navel, and then cut straight up to his sternum, gutting Calyphas. As he then pulled the knife out, he shoved the convulsing boy to the ground. Despite the audience’s complete lack of visuals, it was one of the most gruesome moments in the show.

**Bridling and Torture**

The three Kings that Tamburlaine captures in Act II are made to pull Tamburlaine’s chariot. Before they are bridled, we wanted to come up with ways that Tamburlaine could humiliate them, or treat them like property. In a moment of inspiration, Rick suggested cutting the ears of the Kings as a farmer would his livestock to distinguish his herd from another’s. It stuck, and ended up being one of my favorite moments; Avery seemed to relish it too.
**Spear Swirl**

This battle was the most stylized of all our work, and the shortest. Two opposing armies, both armed with spears, quickly swirled into each other and then off stage. The effect was similar to a slow fade to black, but it happened spatially instead. The combatants maintained their initial points of engagement, moving with their foes, and arcing off stage. As the two generals Tamburlaine and Callapine clashed swords at center stage, their armies were locking spears in a maelstrom around them.

**Child Murder and Pitfall**

Working with children can be difficult, as can doing high falls with actors who are afraid of heights, as can choreographing stabbings with actors who are afraid of knives. Add all three together, and you get a very challenging scene. The script called for a woman to witness her husband die from a bullet wound and fall into a pit, then to stab her son to save him from a more worse fate at the hands of Tamburlaine’s soldiers, throw his body in the pit, light both their corpses on fire, and then attempt to stab herself before she is prevented by Theridamas, one of Tamburlaine’s generals…ah, Marlowe.

**Attempted Rape and Throat Stab**

This scene near the end of the play contained the least feasible of all the storytelling in the play. The script called for the same woman from the previous fray to trick her captor and almost rapist, Tamburlaine’s general Theridamas, into stabbing her in the throat. She does so by weaving a tale that would honestly not trick anyone, but he falls for
it. She produces a vial of liquid, tells him it is magical and that the wearer of it will be able to repel any violence, and then offers it to him in exchange for his mercy (and her chastity). When he doubts her, she suggests that he try it on her. He applies the substance to her neck, and then plunges his dagger into her...brilliant.

This little hole in the sense of the scene wreaked havoc on the actor, who worked mightily to not allow his character come off like a doofus. The scene often got a little snicker from the crowd. Questionable storytelling aside, this was one of the scenes that I got to take the first stab at. Rick came in later and brushed it up, but for the most part, the final product was my own.

**Sacking of Babylon**

Our final battle occurred during one of Tamburlaine’s speeches…thus, it happened in silence. The trouble was the convention did not read well because of all the other noise on stage from foot fall, breath, and accidental vocals. As a result, I always felt like something was missing. I wanted to hear vocals because we did not effectively establish that the violence was in the background, while Tamburlaine’s dialogue was in the foreground. I believe slow motion work may have helped this, but Michael Kahn was dead set against it. I recall him saying that it was “out,” which we got a kick out of.

**EDWARD II**

**Bishop Stripped**
A group of Edward’s train, lead by his lover Gaveston, tore the clothes off of a Bishop, and then physically and verbally taunted and abused him. At the conclusion, Gaveston tried to kill the bishop with a small dagger up his sleeve, but was restrained. Instead, the Bishop was dragged off kicking and screaming to be imprisoned in the tower. The shape of this scene kept shifting and evolving as we got a hold of the very specific costume pieces that it required. The final product took on a very circular shape, as the tormenters took turns moving in and out, while the Bishop tried to defend himself.

Dock Fight

This was the main fight of the show, and had a grand, swashbuckling feel to it. There were many delicious opportunities for bystanders, props, and set pieces to get in the way of the action. An enormous bunch of balloons was incorporated, as were folding chairs, used both offensively and defensively. Since the fight begins with a surprise attack against Gaveston, Rick and I had pushed for the inclusion of either sword canes or knives. However, Director Gail Edwards was insistent that all the combatants be armed with swords. The calvary swords in stock were not even close to historically accurate. Since the play was being set in the 1920’s, it made little sense for all the men to be wearing their dress swords. No matter…I cannot imagine the audience questioned our choice. Gail wanted something showy, exciting, and masculine. Very early in the rehearsal process, before Rick arrived, she asked me to take her male cast through ‘bootcamp with swords,’ and to then rate each actor’s skills. She did not want to bother putting anyone in the fight that was not ready to ‘look good.’ I appreciated her honesty.
When we began work on this fight, we still did not have the swords we would eventually use. It was just as well, as our first priorities were shape and story, and the actors did not need the hardware yet. We use wooden bokken instead, and did not incorporate the steel until we moved into the space. This made me slightly nervous…I would have liked the steel in the actors’ hands about a week earlier, but they handled the transition expertly.

Director Gale Edwards provided a very specific play-by-play of how she wanted to fight to unfold. She was in a big hurry to get the fight on its feet, so she asked me to choreograph it while Rick was out of town. Navigating this request was one of the first fires I had to put out. We ended up waiting, and when we did begin, Rick paid no mind to Gale’s play-by-play. He knew the feel of what she wanted, and was confident that the right story would present itself.

Rick worked with the principles that were our primary focus, while I worked with the ‘extras’ that were our secondary focus. This fight came together very quickly. Rick may not have choreographed it ahead of time, but he had certainly done his homework thinking about the shape of it. In under an hour, the fight was built. In my opinion, the product was some of the strongest in either show.

**Capture of Gaveston**

The image we worked with for this scene was of a pack of hungry, wild animals with the smell of blood in their nostrils. After Gaveston was captured, he was maliciously taunted and severely beaten. His captors took turns leading this activity, while the
watchers joked and restrained Gaveston. This scene took a nasty turn, as the hateful soldiers began to prey upon the fact that Gaveston was homosexual, a fact they resented and misunderstood. As such, the jeering and abuse took on a very sexual tone.

**Beheading of Gaveston**

Some creative staging, misdirection, low light, and a prop head all combined to carry this illusion out flawlessly. I actually wish there had been more lighting, as the moment was staged well enough to allow it. The illusion relied on actor masking and misdirection, not low light. Once again, similarly to when Tamburlaine stabbed his son Calyphas, we utilized the reactions of the actors nearby the beheading to fill out the audience’s perception of the moment. One actor got blood spattered on his face, while another had to keep himself from vomiting. The one moment that did require low lighting, and some brevity, was not the beheading itself, but the moment after when the executioner retrieved the head and held it aloft. We discovered (I discovered, Rick knew) that if we allowed the audience too much time with this moment, the illusion was broken because they began scrutinizing the prop head. With just the right flash of just the right view, the illusion got gasps.

**Torture of Edward (a.k.a. the Bucket Scene)**

When we saw Edward in this scene, his mistreatment had already been going on for some time. As such, he was desperately thirsty, grossly malnourished, exhausted to the point of delirium, and filthy. The soldiers then tossed bucket after bucket of ice cold, fetid
channel water on him. To accomplish this without soaking the stage or resorting to ‘mime,’ we used a shower-like structure that came out of the trap. It had three transparent walls, and a drain in the bottom. The live water on stage was arresting enough to make the suspension of disbelief regarding the ‘shower’ quite easy.

As the soldiers began tossing the buckets of water at Edward, a ghostly yellow light appeared up center, and out of it appeared the winged ghost of Edward’s murdered lover Gaveston, seen only by the audience. Gaveston slowly drifted downstage until he was standing right behind Edward, who by this point was kneeling, broken, filthy, and cold. He then began seemingly caressing Edward through the transparent wall of the shower unit, as the yellow light lit them both from behind, further obscuring the view of the soldiers on the periphery. It was one of the most beautiful and lasting images in the production.

**Murder of Edward**

Gruesome. The director had a very clear idea of what she wanted. Edward’s death occurred just as history reports it did…a red hot poker inserted into his anus, so as not to leave a trace. Initially, Director Gale Edwards wanted to have Edward attempt escape by climbing the barred wall of his cell, and then get handcuffed to the bars, and have the violence happen upstage of him. This presented a number of logistical challenges, chiefly keeping the actor safe. Instead, we placed Edward on his stomach, lying profile. The winged ghost of the deceased Gaveston provided the necessary masking to allow the illusion of violence to read affectively.
**Capture of Mortimer**

This was the final business of the show. Before Mortimer was to be lead out a prisoner, he produced a blade, and charged at the young Edward III, intent on slaying the new King. Before his blade could hit its mark, three soldiers tackled and subdued Mortimer. This small moment ended up being a colossal challenge. Since it was Mortimer’s final moment of the show, the talented actor playing him, Andrew Long, was fired up. Our three soldiers involved were not ideal for the very physically active job of muscling Andrew to the ground. Despite our framework for executing the score safely, it still required some investment from the soldiers, and needed to be executed quickly, and with authority and specificity. In retrospect, I should have just requested early on that we change the actors involved. As a result of the timid actors, Andrew always had to hold back. The whole episode reminded me of some other advice David gave me…if an actor cannot do something the first time, go with something else. Generally, promises of ‘don’t worry, I’ll get it’ do not come to fruition.

In addition to the direction and choreography involved in the moments listed above, there was a great deal of movement coaching that needed to happen. These moments seemed to fall into three categories: coaching individual actors on how to be soldiers/killers/etcetera, coaching groups of soldiers/killers/etcetera how to work together, and fixing transitions between scenes. The soldier work fell largely on my shoulders, and I was happy to have it. While Rick was away, I made sure the actors knew how to hold, shoot, load, and clean a gun.
The Lead Artisan at the STC Chris Young was an invaluable resource in this area, and I often called upon his expertise. We also worked extensively on how to operate as a trained unit when securing an area or capturing an enemy. As always, the audience’s eye goes to what is different onstage, so whenever one soldier was off, the entire illusion collapsed. Tensions within the cast made this work even more challenging; I sometimes got the impression that the cast did not want to work together…a subtly ostracized actor would turn into a not-so-subtly ostracized character without me coaching to the contrary. The work on transitions between scenes would come in to play later during spacing.
Chapter 6

Cast of Characters Offstage

I seale, I cancell, I do what I will,

Feard am I more than lov’d; let me be feard,

And when I frowne, make all the court looke pale [...].

- Mortimer (2382-2384)

(Brooke 377-8)

“If Shakespeare were a rock idol, he’d be Paul McCartney…Christopher Marlowe would be one of those self-destructive enfants terribles like Jim Morrison […] [p]agan and panssexual, braying and bellicose […].”

- Jayne Blanchard, from her November 9, 2007 Washington Times article Bad Boy

Marlowe on a Tear

We had very two strong personalities at the helm of each show. For Tamburlaine, it was the longtime Artistic Director of the STC Michael Kahn, and for Edward II, Australian import Gale Edwards. At first, I thought the two could not be more different. Those in the know commented on how wrong I was, so I was eager to discover why.
I already knew firsthand that Michael could be a handful in the rehearsal hall; he did not often tolerate incompetence, and expected immediate results from our department. He usually did not know how to articulate to us what he wanted, but he knew it keenly when he saw it. Generally, the Resident Assistant Director Stephen Fried acted as a liaison between us and Michael whenever something needed to be discussed. The first time I met Gale, she came across as very nurturing, almost motherly, which seemed to be in stark contrast to Michael’s more businesslike demeanor. The words of introduction she prepared for the first full company and staff meeting were positively inspirational. After spending a little more time in her rehearsals, I learned quickly how much they truly had in common. Gale ran her rehearsals with an iron fist.

A large part of my own learning process during this gig was negotiating these large, talented, and demanding personalities when Rick was not around. I spent every waking moment on call for all three shows, and was often pulled out of one rehearsal to go “fix” something in another. More than once, I was thrust into a position in which I was being called upon to do something that was not exactly in my job description. Usually, this was a result of the directors feeling the time crunch, and wanting me to do Rick’s job for him while he was away…or loudly demanding that I do Rick’s job for him while he was away. Only a few weeks into rehearsals, Gale asked me (and by asked, I mean told) to choreograph the Dock Fight, the biggest and most complicated fight in Edward II. She was adamant that she could not afford to wait the extra week it would take for Rick to return.
I needed for her to know that I was ready, willing and more than able to do so, while at the same time, I needed to get out of it, so I could help Rick do *his* job when he returned. Succeeding at this task was like defusing a bomb. On the one hand, I was delighted that these professionals trusted my work enough to ask me step up. On the other hand, I did not want to step on Rick’s toes. In the end, it took some careful conversations with both Rick and Stage Management in order to keep everything copasetic. Also entertaining was when any possible frustration or anger at Rick’s absence was directed squarely at me in front of forty professional actors. That was always a unique feeling, and one that made me nauseous at the time, but excited later at where I was working.

Another immensely helpful voice of reason during the process, again, was Lead Prop Artisan Chris Young. Rick and I had spent a considerable amount of time with Chris going through the STC’s armory in an effort to pull as much as we could from their current stock. Money was tight, so the more we could get in house, the better. Chris, as far as his knowledge and care of the armory, as well as his willingness to help others out, is virtually unmatched in my opinion. He was an invaluable resource every step of the way on all things swords, guns, blood, and common sense. Chris left a staggering ‘paper’ trail of emails to back up every decision he made, question he asked, and action he took. It seemed he was no stranger to working as an artist within a business that is headed by an administration.
Chapter 7
Spacing and Production

I hold the Fates bound fast in iron chaines,
And with my hand turne Fortune's wheel about,
And sooner shall the Sun fall from his Spheare
Than Tamburlaine be slaine or overcome.
(I, ii, 369-372)
(Brooke 18)

Hubris was ultimately the great Tamburlaine’s downfall; he openly challenged the gods and fate, daring them to stop him if they could. An excess of hubris destroyed him…hmm, ironic?

Moving from the rehearsal hall to the theatre is exciting for any cast. This is especially true when that theatre happens to be a brand spanking new, state-of-the-art, eighty-nine million dollar theatre (Parker). Such was the case when our company christened the stage of Sidney Harman Hall. STC alums would now be playing to seven hundred seventy-five seats, instead of the four hundred fifty-one seats the Lansburgh housed, thanks to a new balcony level at the Harman (Marks).
Frankly, having seen the state of disarray that the Harman was in two weeks before we were scheduled to load in, I was quite impressed we moved in on time. Construction crews were working around the clock to make this possible.

For *Tamburlaine*, everyone involved expected the technical elements to hold us up...no one involved expected the spacing alone to alter the entire course of the run. *Edward II* was a cakewalk comparatively. Before a cue had ever been run, the company had to tackle a whole barrage of obstacles. The scenes were going ahead as planned, but literally every single transition was a train wreck. The first obstacle to bring the spacing rehearsal to an absolute stand-still was the introduction of some enormous new set pieces, all of which had to make their way on and off stage, care of the non-union cast members.

Since the in-house shop was so swamped, some of the larger, more complicated pieces had been outsourced, included the two thrones, the cage and wagon unit, and the chariot. It had been Michael Kahn’s intention to have the thrones carried on, replete with their leader atop, by members of the company. Even without the extra weight of an actor on top, the thrones were far too heavy to be lifted night after night. The craftsmanship was lovely, but each throne weighed as much as a compact car. The larger of the two thrones was supposed to be carried by four actors, at shoulder level, with someone in it. Instead, it took six actors carrying it at their hip without anyone in it, and even then it was a challenge. Even the strongest non-equity set mules could do little to keep from looking awkward as they struggled mightily against the weight and build of these units.
Naturally, it fell to Rick and me to “fix it,” although save rebuilding the damn things lighter, there was little we could do. Our department was called on consistently to make the transitions work. Tamburlaine Assistant Director Stephen Fried worked alongside us.

Of all the spacing obstacles, the enormous chariot gets the award for most horrendous problems caused. Since there was no wing space for the chariot, and since the lack of an upstage crossover prevented it from moving into its upstage center entrance position, it had to be assembled in place just off up center right before its entrance. Of course the scene before its entrance just happened to be the most quiet and intimate in the entire show. It took the crew another three weeks after spacing began before the offstage noise underscoring this delicate, two-person scene did not sound like an automotive shop falling into a crevasse. Also, since wing space was at such a premium, parts of the chariot were stored in the air. On one occasion, the apparatus keeping the large piece in the air became tangled, so the crew could not get it down. So, instead of entering with three captive kings pulling his chariot, Avery Brooks entered with the three kings crawling like dogs in front of him. This was technically the second preview, which in reality was our first run through, and first audience, because the IDR and first preview both had been cancelled at a total loss of around seventy thousand dollars. The show had to be stopped, and Michael Kahn stood up and vamped, addressing the audience about the magic of live theatre. It was priceless.
The space itself also provided some new problems for us to solve. There were many things that the company could do safely and expeditiously in the rehearsal hall that now presented timing issues, grave danger, sheer impossibility, or some combination of the three. We knew that the ladders would be an issue…specifically, that the actors were not allowing nearly enough time to travel up and down them. Things we did not anticipate included existing cases of fear of heights, developing cases of fear of heights, and actors just plain refusing to climb due to the ladder’s wobbly construction. This, we should have seen coming.

Other things, you simply cannot plan for. Since there was not enough wing space, some set pieces had to be stored out in the loading dock. However, if the door to the dock was left open during the show, the hazers would set the fire alarm off. After the house opened, the doors into the space obviously remained open. However, the new glass facade to the building reflected and refracted light into the space, altering the lighting designer’s onstage preset. When I arrived at the theatre the day after the chariot had been stuck in the air, there was a crew member being loaded into an ambulance. Apparently, he had fallen off the loading dock, and struck his head on a parked car. It did not seem to surprise anyone.

When we finally moved forward into production, and Directors Michael Kahn and Gale Edwards, as well as Fight Director Rick Sordelet, were all long gone, everyone was more than ready for some time off. The cast was in extraordinarily low spirits due to the nightmare that was our tech, and before they could blink, understudy rehearsals got underway, in a fast and furious manner.
These rehearsals were to be spearheaded by the Assistant Directors Stephen Fried and Alexander Burns, and myself. Because there were already some cast members leaving the show for other gigs, and some nagging injuries affecting other cast members, we knew our time would be exceedingly short. When we began, over half of our understudy rehearsals already had been changed to put-in rehearsals for understudies that we knew were going on. Actor Jonathan Peck was leaving the show soon for personal reasons, and his understudy Bill Christ had a bum leg that could not bend, so some changes had to be made. Bill was also Avery Brooks’ understudy, so he had the pleasure of learning both roles in the span of two weeks. Avery would later sustain an injury unrelated to the show that would take him out for weeks, so it was lucky we began with Bill when we did. Another actor, Jay Whittaker, was leaving the show to take a role at the Goodman, and his understudy Aubrey Deeker was a southpaw, or lefty, so many changes had to be made. Making the job even tougher, was the fact that money now was at an all-time low, so the Production Stage Manager Matthew Shiner only wanted to call in Union actors if absolutely necessary. This meant that for most of the fight rehearsals, I would be playing the parts of all the Union actors myself. The cast liked to joke that they would be in rehearsal until the show closed. When they came to realize that this was probably true, the joking started to sound more like lamenting.

To make my job easier, and to use as a teaching tool, Rick and I had recorded all of the violence in the show. We rolled camera at the end of each of our fight rehearsals, and again once we were in the space, both at fight call and during runs.
The footage taken after costumes were introduced was less effective for understudy rehearsals because it was difficult to recognize who anyone was. This simple resource greatly expedited my work. Since I had two hours to teach around fifteen actors around forty fight tracks, I could not possibly be working with everyone at once. While I worked, the video was available for study, so by the time I got back to people, they were ahead of the game. Thank goodness the Union now supports this practice. I now swear by it.
Chapter 8

My Working Method

“‘I count Religion but a childish Toy, [a]nd hold there is no sinne but Ignorance.’”

- Christopher Marlowe from the prologue of *Jew of Malta*

(Brooke 241)

Clearly, my own opinion of the plays is now irrevocably influenced by the productions I worked on. Surprisingly, the rep was the first time in STC history that Marlowe was produced. I still believe that presenting the two pieces in rep was a great idea, as it showcased the bookends of Marlowe’s short career. Realistically though, the Marlowe Rep seems to have been a bit ambitious for the STC given the particulars of the timing and situation. First, they were moving into a brand new, still unfinished theatre, with who knows how many hidden problems to work out. Secondly, they had never done a rep before, ever. Thirdly, Director Michael Kahn was restaging an opera in New York during the rehearsals for *Tamburlaine*, and as such, had to continually be traveling back and forth. Last but not least, audiences just do not know Marlowe. All in all, it combined for a traumatic rehearsal period, an even more traumatic transition into the space, a slightly less, although still traumatic run, and a million dollar loss.
One of the chief conclusions I have drawn from this project is that speed and flexibility are at a premium in this business. Rick reiterated this constantly. He never once got so attached to an idea that he was not more than happy to scrap it. The only time I ever witnessed him lose his temper was when the directors were rude to the actors, or when management was wishy-washy about contracts or reimbursement. His rules were simply be nice to people and pay them what they are worth.

As a director and choreographer, I am interested in working methods that incorporate the actors as much as possible. This means continuing to explore and develop ways of generating material that allow the performers to act and react, listen and respond, play tactics and objectives. David’s Water Meets Water and Rick’s Never-Ending Hug are examples of this – highly structured improvisations that can be used first to develop a common, physical vocabulary, and working method, and next to create repeatable action. The question I have then is how do these principles extend past contemporary violence and ensemble building? How do we apply them to other violence genres? Can similar methodologies function as affectively when the characters are trained fighters? I believe they can.

The learning curve is potentially steeper with a weapon in hand, and for two reasons. The first simply is added danger, and the second is the need to convey a level of proficiency. This means that the time it takes to develop the physical vocabulary needed for structured improvisation will most likely be greater.
Many martial arts contain exercises and modes of practice that begin with contact, and then follow a structured improvisation for the purpose of physical listening in order to exploit weaknesses in a partner’s defense; Wing Chun Sticky Hands and T’ai Chi Push Hands are two examples. I have used the same principles very successfully with both knife work, and rapier and dagger. I have found that teaching the execution of moves without exercises that foster greater physical listening can only be effective with the most advanced students. For the purposes of crafting story, actors need a work forum where they can constantly be listening and discovering.

Another exercise that I have borrowed and adapted for my own use, I picked up at a regional fight workshop (Winter Wonderland circa 2002?) from Fight Director Robin McFarquar. I believe he called it Fights on the Fly. His goal seemed to be to build a framework wherein combatants could actually commit to attacking each other. He did so by beginning the exercise with a single attack, to a single target – a thrust low center. The defender could parry however he/she saw fit. Over time, he added other attacks, and had the attacker verbally call out their attack and target. The exercise can be further developed so that the attackers make their intent known through the windup alone, so that no verbal information need be exchanged. As with Water Meets Water, a body that is really going for an objective appears very different from one that is not. My goal is to find the exercises and/or choreographic methods that enable physical truth.
A recent article by Dr. Jonathan Cole in the fall/winter 2007 edition of The Fight Master, the journal of the Society of American Fight Directors, discusses these ideas at length. His article discusses ways to “allow actors to collaborate more fully in the choreography process” (17). Dr. Cole found that teaching actors the principles behind a weapon yielded more ownership over its use than when teaching technique alone. During a production of *Macbeth* that he directed and choreographed, he gave the actors instruction in the weapons styles, so that they had a basic working knowledge of the necessary, physical vocabulary, and then let the actors choreograph the fights themselves, while he guided them. Dr. Cole’s words echo my own sentiment: “[i]n […] successful cases, we create physical fluency in the actor, and remove the need for constant translation by the fight choreographer between the world of technique and the world of actor impulse” (18).

Another of my own mentors in movement, Dr. Aaron Anderson, has pointed out that the ‘what’ is easier to coach and teach than the ‘how.’ I take this to mean that choreography need not depend on flawless execution. Good storytelling, crafted within the range, talent, and truth of the performers, seems to yield better results. I continue to discover more and more how part of my job description as a Movement Teacher or Designer is being able to effectively articulate what I do to directors, students, and colleagues alike. Learning how to do so has fostered as much growth in my own craft, as the actual productions and assignments.
David Leong was recently in negotiation with the STC to remount the saber duel he choreographed for *Hamlet*. When he expressed reservations about having the time or desire to re-teach the fight, the STC representative asked if I was available. I guess I left a positive impression.
Works Cited
Works Cited


Appendix A

Tamburlaine Fight Notation

Hijacking

1. Jair’s and James K.’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jair</th>
<th>James K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Duck</td>
<td>Horz head cut R-L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Sliding UR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catch</td>
<td>Horz chest cut L-R</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Both struggle to Jair upstage of James K.]

Disarm, R end to L ➔ Go w/
Sweep leg ➔ React to ground
Push to ground with foot ➔ React to ground
Keep on guard

2. RJ’s, Blake’s and Terrence’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RJ</th>
<th>Terrence</th>
<th>Blake</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Keep Terrence on guard</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Cut L arm, fore ➔ Parry 4
Cut R arm, butt ➔ Parry 3
Shove away, fore ➔ React
Horz head cut R-L ➔ Duck
Thrust L hip ➔ Parry 7
Go w/ ➔ Bind over, grab w/ L
Release staff ➔ Cut to hand, disarm
React ➔ Put on guard (Spinning clockwise)

Mycetes Cross

1. Danyon’s, Chris C.’s, Blake’s, Kevin’s and Austin’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Danyon</th>
<th>Chris C.</th>
<th>Austin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 1</td>
<td>Thrust L hip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Circle clockwise)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>React</td>
<td></td>
<td>Stab L flank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Driven off SL)</td>
<td></td>
<td>(Drive off SL)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Blake

|Parry low 5     | Thrust D of chest |
|Circle around head, | React            |
|Slice back R-L   |                   |

[Before Blake’s exchange with Chris C., he has the following exchanges]
Kevin

Beat parry 1 ↔ Thrust L hip

Vayu

Beat parry high 3 ↔ Diag cut R head

2. Kenric’s, Adriano’s and Kaytie’s Tracks

Kenric Adriano Kaytie

Beat parry 1 ↔ Spear thrust R hip Spear thrust R chest
React ↔ Stab mid, shove out Stab mid, shove out

3. Anthony’s, Jair’s, Jefferson’s and Abe’s Tracks

Anthony Abe

Beat parry 2 ↔ Spear thrust R hip

Jair

Beat parry 1 ↔ Spear thrust L hip

Jefferson

Vert head cut ➔ Parry 5

Anthony Jefferson

Go w/, react ↔ Bind, pull around to SL, push away
React to off SL ↔ Slice back, follow off SL
4. Kurt’s, Majed’s and Vayu’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kurt</th>
<th>Majed</th>
<th>Jair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 2</td>
<td>Spear thrust R hip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry high 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Spear thrust D of L head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vayu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vert head cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go w/, react</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Avery’s UC Entrance (Into Mycetes Scene)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avery</th>
<th>Blake</th>
<th>Anthony</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 3</td>
<td>Cut R arm</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 4</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cut L arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slice Anthony R-L mid</td>
<td></td>
<td>React</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning clockwise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slice Blake R-L back</td>
<td>React</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning clockwise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Cosroe Battle

1. Avery’s and Andrew’s Tracks

**Avery**

Beat parry 1  ⇪  Thrust L hip

Beat parry 2  ⇪  Thrust R hip

**Andrew**

Beat parry 1  ⇪  Thrust L hip

James D.

Beat parry 2  ⇪  Thrust R hip

Jonathan

Beat parry 1  ⇪  Thrust L hip

Avery

Parry 2  ⇪  L Thrust R hip

Force corps a corps, grab w/  ⇒  Go w/

L, throw DR

(Spinning clockwise)

Jefferson

Kenric

Parry 1  ⇪  Thrust L hip

Bind into corps a corps,  ⇒  Go w/, react

Slice chest, push away

[During Avery’s business above, Andrew has the following exchanges]

**Terrence**

Beat parry high 4  ⇪  Diag cut L head

**Craig**

Avoid U  ⇪  Diag slash L-R
**Abe, Majed & Austin**

Spear thrust U of head ➔ Beat parry high 4 to all 3

(Travelling U)

**Kavgie**

Spear thrust R hip ➔ Beat parry 2

**Chris C.**

Spear thrust U of mid ➔ False-edge croise up

**Jair**

Spear thrust D of mid ➔ Hand parry 2

Avoid D ➪ Vert head cut

[The action then resumes with Avery]

**Avery**

Beat parry high 3 ➪ Vert head cut

(Spinning clockwise to face)

Horz stomach cut R-L ➔ Avoid bk

Parry 3 ➪ Thrust R chest

**Avery**

Croise to corps a corps ➔ Go w/

Diag head slash R-L ➔ Avoid

(Switching places) (Ducking under)

Cut R hip ➔ Parry 2

Pull out, slice back ➔ Attempt bind w/ exp., react

**Andrew**
[The action below follows Avery’s track]

**Chris M.**

Slice stomach R-L ➔ Windup, react

**James D.**

Parry 1 ⇐ Thrust L hip
Bind w/ exp., push away SL ➔ Go w/

[During the brief exchanges above, Andrew has the following]

**Kurt**

Diag spear slash R-L ➔ Avoid

**Scott**

Cut R arm ➔ Parry 3
Go w/ ⇐ Grab w/ L, throw to DR

[After which Andrew and Avery take up with each other again]

**Avery**

Beat parry 1 ⇐ Cut L hip
Thrust/cut L hip ➔ Beat parry 1
Beat parry 1 ⇐ Cut L hip
Thrust/cut L hip ➔ Beat parry 1
Beat parry 1 ⇐ Cut L hip
Cut L arm ➔ 2-hand parry 4
Cut R arm ➔ 2-hand parry 3
Avery
Cut L arm ➔ 2-hand parry 4
Force corps a corps ➔ Go w/

[Following 4 bearbaiting attacks (Craig to L thigh, Scott to R flank, Craig to L thigh, Terrence to L thigh) from his Generals, Avery thrusts home low center]

2. Jonathan’s Track

Jonathan
Thrust L hip ➔ Beat parry 1

Terrence
Diag cut L head ➔ Beat parry high 4

Craig
Vert head cut ➔ L Parry 5
Push off ➔ Go w/

(Spinning clockwise)
R elbow to mid ➔ React

Majed
Parry 2 ➔ Spear thrust R hip
Croise up w/ exp., ➔ React into Abe and Austin

Add L hand to push away

Craig
Beat parry 2 ➔ Thrust R hip
Abe & Austin

React  ⇐  Spear stab L flank, Abe 1st, Austin 2nd

Horz head cut R-L  ⇒  Duck [Majed avoids bk]

Majed

React  ⇐  Spear stab L flank

Beat spears counter 2  ⇒  All 3 react disengaging D

Craig

Begin windup, react  ⇐  Slice L flank

Jonathan

Parry 2  ⇐  Spear thrust R hip

Go w/, react  ⇐  Abe disarms

Abe

Go w/ to off SL  ⇐  Throw out SL

3. James D.’s and Scott’s Tracks

[The following exchange begins after James D.’s first exchange with Avery]

James D.

Cut R hip  ⇒  Parry 2

Go w/  ⇐  Bind w/ expulsion

Scott

Parry high 3  ⇐  Diag cut R head

Parry high 4  ⇐  Diag cut L head
Parry high 3  
React  
[The combatants spin 360 degrees clockwise, and then 180 degrees counterclockwise, before resuming with the following]  
2-hand parry 4  
2-hand parry 2  
2-hand parry 4  
Go w/  
React  
[After the above exchange, Scott moves on to the following…Scott’s exchange w/]  
John  
React  
Andrew  
Parry 3  
(Spinning clockwise)  
Throw by w/ L  
Jefferson  
L thrust R hip  
Go w/  
(Spinning clockwise)  
Scott  
Slice R flank  
Scott  
Cut R arm  
(Spinning clockwise)  
Go w/ towards DR  
(Parry 2)  
Bind w/ expulsion to corps a corps, U of Jefferson
React, go w/ to off SR ↔ Slice throat L-R, throw off SR

[During the above exchange, James D. had the following exchange]

**James D.**

Thrust L hip ➔ Parry 1

Go w/ ↔ Bind w/ expulsion, push SL

**Avery**

**Craig**

2-hand cut R hip ➔ L parry 1

Go w/ ↔ Croise w/ expulsion

L kick to L thigh ➔ React back

**Majed & Austin**

Croise up w/ expulsion ↔ Spear thrust D of mid

**Craig**

React, go w/ to off SL ↔ Slice mid, throw off SL

4. Terrence’s, Chris M.’s and Vayu’s Tracks

[The following picks up after Terrence’s two exchanges with Andrew and Jonathan]

**Terrence**

Hanging parry 5A ↔ Vert head cut

(Vayu)

(On the pass)

**Chris M.**

Beat parry high 4 ↔ Diag cut L head
Knee to mid, throw down \rightarrow React toward C

**Terrence**
Parry 5 \leftarrow Vert head cut

**Jefferson & Vayu**

Vert head cut

**Chris M.**

Croise into parry low 5 \leftarrow Thrust D of low center

**Chris M. & Vayu**

Shove Jefferson to ground

**Chris M.**

Beat parry 5 \leftarrow Vert head cut

**Chris M.**

Beat parry 2 \leftarrow Cut R hip, react to ground

**Vayu**

Cut L hip

**Jefferson**

Beat parry 1 \leftarrow Diag cut L head

**Jefferson**

Slice mid \rightarrow React

[The remainder of Jefferson’s track can be found in #3; Chris M. is dispatched by Avery, thrown out SR by Terrence, after which Terrence goes onto the following]
Beat parry high 4 \rightarrow Diag cut L head
(Entering from SR door)
Slice mid, back, leg \rightarrow React, stumble out SR

[**Terrence** then gets in place for the bearbaiting]

[While the above has been transpiring, **Vayu** finishes his track UR…the following
begins after his last exchange with **Terrence**]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Vayu</strong></th>
<th><strong>Kurt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Kevin</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 2 \rightarrow Spear thrust R hip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 1 \rightarrow Spear thrust L hip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vayu</strong></td>
<td><strong>Adriano</strong></td>
<td><strong>Kevin</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skating parry high 2 \rightarrow Spear thrust R hip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spinning clockwise)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry high 3 \rightarrow Vert head cut</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry 2 \rightarrow Spear thrust R hip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skating parry 1 \rightarrow Spear thrust L hip</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vert head cut \rightarrow 2-hand parry head</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>React \rightarrow Stab mid, force out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>React out UR \rightarrow Stab mid, force out</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5. John’s, Jair’s, Chris C.’s and Kurt’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John</th>
<th>Adriano &amp; Kevin</th>
<th>Kurt</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 2</td>
<td>Spear thrust D of mid</td>
<td>Spear thrust L hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Travelling to SR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry 1</td>
<td>Spear thrust L hip</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bind into spear disarm</td>
<td>Go w/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning clockwise)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go w/</td>
<td>Spear disarm back</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Kurt then moves onto Vayu…see #4]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>John</th>
<th>Chris C. &amp; Jair</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parry 2</td>
<td>Spear thrust R hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bind w/ expulsion</td>
<td>Go w/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>React, go w/ out UC</td>
<td>Possible wound and throw out UC</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Kaytie’s and Kenric’s Tracks

[After Kaytie’s first attack against Andrew, and Kenric’s first attack against Avery, they square off UL]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kaytie</th>
<th>Kenric</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Spear thrust R hip</td>
<td>Parry counter 2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Kavtie**

- Go w/, react ➔ Disarm, slice back
  
  (Spinning clockwise)

- Avoid, disarm ➔ Vert head cut, go w/
  
  (Spinning clockwise)

- Cut R leg ➔ Parry leg w/ butt-end

- Go w/ ➔ Bind w/ expulsion

- React ➔ Stab back

- Possible wound, push out UL ➔ Go w/ out UL

---

**7. Kevin’s, Adriano’s, Jay’s and JJ’s Tracks**

**Adriano**

- Spear thrust D of mid ➔ Banner parry mid
  
  (Spinning clockwise)

- Spear thrust L flank ➔ Banner parry L flank

- Push out UR w/ butt-end ➔ Go w/ out UR

  [At the same time…]

---

**Kevin**

- Spear thrust U of mid ➔ Banner parry mid
  
  (Spinning counterclockwise)

---

**Jay**

- Banner parry mid

---

**JJ**

- Banner parry L flank

- Banner parry R flank
Kurt

Stab mid ➔ React out UR

Virgin Slaughter

1. Kaytie’s Track

Kaytie begins to run SR, and is intercepted by Terrence, who grabs her R arm and throws her towards UL, and her 4 killers, JJ (1), Austin (2), Adriano (3) and Blake (4).

2. Kaitlin’s Track

Kaitlin runs to the UR ladder and begins to climb…she is 2-3 rungs up when she is stabbed by Kenric, Chris C. and Kevin. She is then grabbed around the waist by Craig, who helps her down and escorts her off UR.

3. Deanne’s Track

Deanne is grabbed by Scott, held until Kaytie is dispatched, and then thrown to the ground, after which she is stabbed by Abe, Jair, Anthony, Majed and Scott, the first four with spears followed by Scott with his sword.
Babylon

1. Craig’s and Jefferson’s Tracks

Craig     Jefferson     James K.
L parry 5  ←  L vert head cut  Vert head cut
Croise down  →  Go w/ to D of Craig  Go w/ to past Craig to engage w/ Abe
Grab w/ R, slice mid  →  React
Throw to ground  →  React to ground

Kurt
Parry 1  ←  L thrust L hip
Envelope to trap  →  Go w/
Slice mid L-R, disarm  →  React
Kick to ground  →  React to ground

[See Abe’s track, #4, for the end of James K.’s track]

2. Terrence’s Track

Terrence     Vayu
Parry 5A  ←  Vert head cut
(Traveling past Terrence)

Anthony
Beat parry high 3  ←  Diag cut R head
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Terrence</strong></th>
<th><strong>Anthony</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parry 7</td>
<td>Cut L leg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry 4</td>
<td>Cut L arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Force corps a corps,</td>
<td>Go w/ to SL of Terrence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘bind’ over</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lift sword up, slice mid,</td>
<td>React to off SR</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>throw off SR</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3. Kurt’s Track

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Kurt</strong></th>
<th><strong>Vayu</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parry high 4</td>
<td>Diag cut L head</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry 7</td>
<td>Cut L hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry 2</td>
<td>Cut R hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bind w/ expulsion</td>
<td>Go w/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Spinning counterclockwise)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duck, slice mid</td>
<td>Wind up for cut, react</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push out UC</td>
<td>Go w/ to out UC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JJ</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push kick to face</td>
<td>React</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# 4. Abe’s and JJ’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abe</th>
<th>JJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parry 2</td>
<td>Cut R hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croise up</td>
<td>Go w/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slice mid</td>
<td>React to ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning clockwise past Abe)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[The action below follows Abe’s track]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abe</th>
<th>James K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Croise down, grab w/ L</td>
<td>Vert head cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Go w/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abe</th>
<th>James K.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slice mid R-L, L-R</td>
<td>React</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slice back</td>
<td>React to ground</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning clockwise)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stab back</td>
<td>React</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[During the above action, JJ has the following exchanges]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kurt</th>
<th>JJ</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Glancing diag head cut R-L</td>
<td>Glancing diag head cut R-L</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Traveling to DR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Terrence</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beat parry 3</td>
<td>Cut R arm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning clockwise)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Slice back L-R ➔ React
Disarm ➔ Go w/
Put on point, cross low ➔ React
## Dock Fight

### 1. Jonathan’s and Jay’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jonathan</th>
<th>Vavu</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2-hand diag head slash R-L</td>
<td>Avoid L (SR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go w/ toward David M.</td>
<td>Shove U</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Grab David M. w/ L, spin around him to facing D]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jay**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2-hand beat parry 3</th>
<th>Cut R arm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Danyon**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2-hand parry ¾, front</th>
<th>Cut R arm</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(Traveling by to UR)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Push by w/ L</td>
<td>Go w/ toward UR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Jay**

| 2-hand parry 4                   | Cut L arm  |
| 2-hand parry 3                   | Cut R arm  |
| Envelope                         | Go w/      |
| (Pressing bk, end RFF)           |            |
| React to ground                  | Pull out, kick R thigh w/ L |
(Spinning 180 counter)

Avoid U ☐ Diag slash R-L
Cut L leg ☒ Parry 1

(From knees)

Go w/ ☐ Begin bind

(Pressing fwd) (Backing up)

[Jonathan falls back to UR w/ David M. while Jay’s track continues; Jay
stumbles over Andrew’s rolling body as he is backing up; he then rolls clockwise
to standing, and continues as follows]

Andrew ☐

Parry 2 ☐ Thrust R hip
Croise into parry 5A ☒ Go w/
Expulse blades ☒ Go w/

Jay ☐

(Clearing bk)

2. Vayu’s and Andrew’s Tracks

[After Vayu’s initial exchange w/ Jonathan, he ducks in reaction to Danyon’s
cross to SR, and then picks up with the following]
**Vayu**

- Catch hands w/ both
- Disarm
- (Spinning clockwise)

[During the above, **Andrew** has handed off his hat and scabbard to **JJ**]

**David M.**

- Vert head cut
- Go w/, react toward UR
- (Spinning clockwise)

**Andrew**

- Parry 4
- Parry 2
- Bind w/ expulsion
- Horz head cut L-R
- Parry 7
- Bind into face push
- Diag cut R-L to deck

[Above cut is joined by a vert cut to deck by **Wally**]

- Cut-through L arm
- Cut R leg
- Go w/
- Duck
- Cut L leg
- React to ground
- Roll avoid L (SR)

**Wally** moves **Vayu** aside, and winds up to attack **Andrew**, but **Jay** gets in the way.
**Wally**  
Renewed vert head cut ➔ Beat parry 5A

**Danyon**  
Thrust R hip ➔ Beat parry 2

**Vayu**  
Diag cut L head ➔ Beat parry high 4

**Jay**  
Thrust R hip ➔ Parry 2  
Go w/ ➜ Begin bind into parry 5A

**Danyon & Wally**  
Vert head cut ➔ Parry 5A  
Go w/ ➜ Croise U expulsing blades

**Vayu**  
Cut L hip ➔ Parry 7  
Go w/, react ➜ Envelope to wound L flank  
(Passing bk) ➜ (Passing fwd)  
React ➜ Extend blade in, and pull out

[**Andrew** winds up for a finishing blow, but thinks better of it, as **David M.** relieves him of his blade]
3. James D.’s and Terrence’s Tracks

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>James D.</th>
<th>Danyon</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vert head cut</td>
<td>Parry 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(Spinning away clockwise to SR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adriano</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parry 7</td>
<td>2-hand thrust L hip</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bind into parry 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horz stom cut R-L</td>
<td>Avoid bk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James D.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vert head cut</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Traveling past toward DL)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Holding ground)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Terrence

[The following action following James D. and Terrence…see the next track for the continuation of Adriano’s action]
Envelope ➔ Go w/

(Pressing fwd)

Yield high 1 ← Thrust R chest

Go w/ ← Force corps a corps

Shove to DL pillar ➔ Go w/, react

Pull to DL, both D ➔ Go w/

Go w/, react ← Shove to DL pillar

[James D. then binds to both facing U, just SR of pillar, and they struggle against the pillar until Vayu is wounded, at which time Terrence pushes James D. off toward U]

4. Adriano’s and JJ’s Tracks

[Adriano tosses his scabbard away off SL at the start of the fight; the following picks up after he finishes his above business with James D.]

**Adriano**

Feint horz stom cut L-R ➔ Clear bk

**JJ**

[Wally then takes Adriano’s sword from him as JJ picks up the SL chair]
**Wally**

Cut through L arm \(\implies\) Parry chair

[See #5 for Wally’s full track]

**Adriano**

Duck \(\leftarrow\) Horz head cut L-R
Snatch chair away \(\implies\) React
Parry chair \(\leftarrow\) 2-hand vert head cut
Croise L w/ expulsion \(\implies\) Go w/

(Traveling past) \(\rightarrow\) (Spinning past clockwise)

Parry chair \(\leftarrow\) 2-hand cut R arm
Parry chair \(\leftarrow\) Thrust high center
Avoid \(\leftarrow\) 2-hand vert head cut colliding w/ balloons

(Spinning counter, traveling SR)

[The following exchange occurs when they reach the UC corridor]

\(\leftarrow\) Initiate attack

Toss chair to avert \(\implies\) Catch and drop
Catch w/ both \(\leftarrow\) Vert head cut
Force corps a corps \(\implies\) Go w/
Disarm ➔ React

(Spinning clockwise)

Put on point

### 5. Wally’s Track

[At the start, Wally clears to the DL corner, and is guided back by Terrence; he then circles around the DL pillar, takes Adriano’s sword, and proceeds with the following]

**Wally**

Cut through L arm ➔ Parry chair

Vert cut to deck [w/ Vayu, ➔ Roll L (SR)

who is wounded]

Tend to Vayu, ➔ Roll L (SR)

renew same attack

**Wally**

Push Vayu back, attempt ➔ [Interrupted by Jay stumbling over

same attack

Finish vert head cut ➔ Beat parry 5A

**Andrew**

**JJ**

**Andrew**
[React back and help Danyon by]

Vert head cut ➔ Binding Jay to parry 5A
[w/ Danyon]
Go w/ ➔ Croise U

[After Vayu is stabbed, Wally runs and falls over his body; after Vayu is escorted out, Wally delivers a right cross (chest knap) to Andrew]

6. Danyon’s and Kenric’s Tracks

**James D.**

Vert head cut ➔ Parry 5
(Spinning away clockwise to SR)

**Danyon**

**Jonathan**

2-hand parry ¾, front ➔ Cut R arm
(Continuing path toward UR)

Push by w/ L ➔ Go w/ toward UR

[Danyon tosses his scabbard off SR; Kenric positions himself, tossing the SR chair away]
**Kenric**

Parry 3  \(\leftrightarrow\)  2-hand cut high center

Go w/  \(\leftrightarrow\)  Force corps a corps

(\text{Drive to C})

Shove away D  \(\rightarrow\)  Go w/

2-hand cut L arm  \(\rightarrow\)  2-hand parry 3

Thrust R hip  \(\rightarrow\)  Parry 2

Continue to corps a corps  \(\rightarrow\)  Allow, lock up

**Kenric**

React back  \(\leftrightarrow\)  L elbow chest

**Danyon**

**Andrew**

Parry 2  \(\leftrightarrow\)  Thrust R hip

Parry 5A  \(\leftrightarrow\)  Vert head cut \([\text{w/ Wally}]\)

Croise U expulsing blades  \(\rightarrow\)  Go w/

[\text{Andrew then dispatches Vayu}]

**Note:** The two waiters, \textbf{Austin} (SR) and \textbf{Chris C.} (SL) retrieve the chairs at the end of the fight.
APPENDIX C

TAMBURLAINE SET MODEL
VITA

Christopher Drew Vidal was born in Rockford, Illinois on June 1, 1976. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1998, where he majored in Theatre, and completed the Acting Specialist Program. He then spent six years as an actor and Fight Director in Chicago. During that time, he worked for such companies as the Illinois Shakespeare Festival, Wisconsin Shakespeare Festival, New American Theatre, Madison Rep, Famous Door, Boxer Rebellion, Rivendell, Tin Fish, Red Hen, Defiant, Collaboraction, and the Hypocrites. He is an Advanced Actor/Combatant with the Society of American Fight Directors, and has overseen the movement design for over fifty shows.