

Introduction to the Foundation Concepts of Stage Combat

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The first rule of stage combat is safety. Your actions must be repeatable from show to show, and cause no injury to yourself, your partner, or the environment (unless they are intended to be replaced, like break-away glass).

We achieve safety using the following **Safety Features**:

- Choreography: Follow the plan. All moves are pre-determined, nothing is improvised
- Communication: eye contact, touch, voice. Prime example is Cue-Reaction-Action.
- Techniques:
 - Out-Of-Distance
 - Off-Target/Target Displacement
 - Alleys or Lanes, Imaginary Wall
 - Victim Controlled and Shared Energy

The second rule of stage combat (a very close second) is story: “It’s not about fighting, it’s about acting”. Stage combat is illusion, not battle.

The purpose of a fight scene is to tell a story, and to develop character and plot. When we skip a step or “geek out” in the fight moves, the storytelling and development get lost, and the audience sees only a flurry of movement. They are wondering what just happened when we want them to be concerned for the characters. Instead, you must work in co-operation with your partner to follow the choreographed sequence and lead the audience through the story. Especially as violence on stage is often at the climax -- or at least comes out of a long build of tension -- we need to be sure that the audience can follow every moment.

Rehearsal Technique:

1. Move slowly and complete your actions:
Remember that your goal for performance is a speed that the audience can follow, not the fastest you are physically capable of performing.
2. Pay attention to your partner.
It’s fight scene, not two monologues at once.
3. Be specific:
“Practice doesn’t make perfect. Perfect Practice makes perfect. Practice only makes permanent.” Every time you rehearse, do the actions as accurately as you can. Rehearsing sloppily only ensures that you will perform sloppily.
Also, occasionally quiz yourself: “What are the safety features in this technique?” and “What are the beats here? What is my intent or objective?”

This sheet is a summary of the introductory lessons in Stage Combat, and will serve as a reminder of what we covered. Please remember that the study of Stage Combat can involve many years, and this is far from all of the information you need. If you have any questions, or are interested in further information, please contact us at Workshop@BurningMountain.ca.