

The Fight Captain and Other Fight Notes and Suggestions

1. Producers

- a. Ensure that the Director's vision (style, period, etc.) is fully revealed to the Fight Director
- b. Ensure that rehearsal weapons (preferably the same as those used in performances) are available as early as possible in the rehearsal period
- c. Ensure that the Fight Director is able to start fight rehearsals as early in the process as possible/practicable
- d. Make sure that rooms are available for fight rehearsals, which can (sometimes) happen concurrently with and separately from other rehearsals

2. Designers

- a. Need to make sure major changes are communicated to the Fight Director (through the Fight ASM or the Fight Captains is acceptable)
- b. Need to make sure fight areas are appropriately lit
- c. Need to make sure that the costumes can be fought in (or, at least, that the Fight Director knows ahead of time if there could be issues)

3. Assistant Choreographer

- a. Assist the Fight Director in developing the fights
 - i. Work with the Fight Director during times or in spaces outside the normal rehearsal schedule
 - ii. Work with the Fight Director when training the Fighters in the fight
- b. Can (maybe should) also serve as a Fight Captain
 - i. Should not have too large a role

4. Fight Stage Manager (much of this can be done by the Fight Captain)

- a. It would be preferable if fight rehearsals were covered by the same Stage Manager (or ASM) throughout the rehearsal process
- b. Should make sure that the choreography is notated in a consistent and legible manner
- c. Should ensure that the Fight Director is aware of any physical violence in the show that might not be generally considered a *fight*--this is to make sure that all violence uses the same 'physical language, as it were
- d. Should make sure that occasional fight rehearsals are recorded so that Fighters, Fight Captains, the Fight Director, the Director, and any Assistant Choreographers can review
- e. Should make sure weapons are available for rehearsals
- f. Should make sure that safety considerations are taken into account (knee pads, gym mats, etc.)
- g. Should work with the Stage Manager and the Fight Director to make sure that sufficient rehearsal time is set aside for Choreography and polishing
- h. Should work with the Stage Manager to ensure that adequate time is set aside during which Fighters can rehearse the choreography

- i. Should work with the Stage Manager to ensure that the Director has ample opportunity to view the fights
- j. Should ensure open and frequent communication between the Director and the Fight Director
- k. Should make sure information on the fights is made available to Designers (specifically Sets, Lights, and Costumes)
- l. Supply the Fight Director with set designs and other design information
- m. Ensure the Fight Director has at least some access to the performance space (preferably for some rehearsals)
- n. May, of course, serve as a Fight Captain

5. Fight Captain

- a. Should attend fight rehearsals, when possible
- b. Should learn the choreography
- c. Should communicate with the Fight ASM (or the SM) and the Fight Director to schedule regular fight rehearsals
- d. Should run regular fight rehearsals when the Fight Director is not available
- e. During rehearsals, the Fight Captain should
 - i. Be able to make slight adjustments with the Fighters to reflect Fighter needs or design issues that the Fight Director might not be aware of
 - ii. Not make changes that affect the overall choreography
- f. Should communicate with the Fight Director concerning safety or other issues (Fighter comfort and/or ability, design needs, Director's comments or wishes that come up during rehearsals)
- g. Take proper care of the weapons
 - i. Wooden weapons should be free of splinters
 - ii. Ropes or cloths should not be too rough
 - iii. Swords (daggers, other metal weapons)
 - 1. Should be regularly polished and oiled
 - a. A light WD-40 would be fine for after rehearsals or performances to clean weapons of oil from hands
 - b. For long-term storage
 - i. Smear with Vaseline
 - ii. Store in sawdust or strips of paper
 - 2. Should be filed along the edges to eliminate and prevent burrs
 - a. Usually, a light sandpaper will suffice
 - b. Bigger burrs can be handled with a metal file
 - 3. Swords should be checked regularly during rehearsals and production weeks to ensure they are in good shape
- h. Run Fight Calls before each performance (see below)
- i. Give general notes to Fighters regarding choreography and other issues
- j. Warm-up Fighters**
 - i. Here is a simple warm-up that is very useful terms hardly technical
 - 1. Toe Bouncing (up on tiptoes) eight times

- a. X 4
- 2. Foot rolls (lift foot and roll), eight count each foot
 - a. X 4 (X 2 each foot)
- 3. Jumps eight times
 - a. X 4
- 4. Bouncing Lunges (Right X 8, then Left X 8); each initial lunge accompanied by a slap hand knap (a clap)
 - a. X 4 (twice each direction)
- 5. Deep(ish) knee bends (down count 4, up count 4)
 - a. X 4
- 6. Head Rolls (Right count 4, Left count 4)
 - a. X 4
- 7. Ear to shoulder (Right count 2, Left count 2. Repeat)
 - a. X 2
- 8. Head Isolations (look Right, bounce times 2; look Left, bounce 2)
 - a. X 4
- 9. Twists (from the waist, arms up at shoulder level and bent) bouncing slightly Right count 4, Left count 4
 - a. X 4
- 10. Reaches (arm over head, bouncing slightly): Right count 4, Left count 4
 - a. X 4
- 11. Big Circles (Arms to the sky, then around to the Right, brushing the floor and then back up to the sky; repeat to the Left), each count 4
 - a. X 4
- 12. Run in place, count 8
 - a. X 4
- 13. Shake out the entire body, count 8
 - ii. This should cover most things.
- k. Production Duties
 - i. Ensure that weapons are on their allotted props tables
 - ii. Ensure that weapons are checked before every performance
 - iii. Ensure that weapons are returned after the performances

6. Fight Calls

- a. Fight Calls should be run for each rehearsal/performance during the production period (including tech rehearsals)
- b. They should be held after warm-up and before costumes are put on (unless the costumes affect the fights)
 - i. Character shoes should be worn
- c. Each fight should be run at least twice (at 75% then at 98%)
 - i. More complicated fights should be rehearsed also at 50%
- d. Fight calls should be taken seriously

- i. The stage should not be otherwise used (at least in the fight areas)
- ii. Fighters should be focussed on the fight call and should not be distracted by Crew members, other Actors, or other events happening on the stage

7. Rules for Stage Combat

- a. Don't hurt yourself
- b. Don't hurt your partner
- c. Don't hurt other members of the production
- d. Don't hurt the Fight Director
- e. Don't hurt the audience
- f. 'STOP' means 'STOP' (kind of like 'NO' means 'NO')
 - i. That means stepping away from the fight
 - ii. Securing weapons
 - iii. Announcing that those who have been told to stop have actually stopped ("Thank you, stop!")
- g. Once choreography is set, then it is set; the Fight Captain might have some latitude, but any adjustments should be made with the permission and knowledge of the Fight Director
- h. Don't roughhouse with weapons
- i. Alcohol and drugs should never be imbibed/taken in the hours leading up to a performance
- j. Do not touch weapons unless they are your weapons or you otherwise have a legitimate reason to touch the weapons (yes, like genitalia, but in this case, consent simply is not enough)
- k. Carry weapons point down
- l. Wear appropriate clothing for fight rehearsals
 - i. Pants and shirts that can be moved in
 - 1. Skirts or dresses are probably not a good idea
 - ii. Sneakers or athletic shoes
 - 1. No flip-flops or sandals
 - 2. Barefoot is all right, but preferably not done
 - iii. Once the Fighters are comfortable with the choreography, character shoes and something approximating the costume (if needed--dresses, for example) can be used
 - iv. Fighters should be allowed to use (non-slippery) gloves for rehearsals if they like
- m. Take *reasonable* precautions to avoid dangerous activities--especially in the late part of the rehearsal period
- n. The *acting* of a fight is much more important than the *choreography*
- o. Fighters certainly have the right to ask not to do certain moves--based on character needs or personal comfort
- p. Fighters have to be aware that stage violence is a physical act
 - i. Partners will come in physical contact with each other

- ii. The Fight Director, Fight Captains, Assistant Choreographers will likely come into physical contact with the Fighters
 - 1. If there are issues, or if someone is uncomfortable being touched, those affected should be informed as early in the process as possible
- q. Accidents happen
 - i. Avoid them
 - ii. Don't beat yourself up over them
 - iii. Learn from them
 - iv. Adapt and adjust