

Lessons from Fencing Movies
or
Fighting for the Audience as Well as for the Win
By Robin of Gilwell

Respectfully dedicated to Queen Gilyan Alienora of Clonmacnoise,
for her interest and support

It might be a fight like you see on the screen
A swain getting slain for the love of a queen
Some great Shakespearean scene
Where a ghost and a prince meet, and everyone ends in mincemeat.
“That’s Entertainment,” 1952, (Schwartz and Dietz)

Introduction

In the fall of 2012, I was preparing for Queen’s Champion. Being out of work, I had the luxury to spend all day watching swashbuckling movies. For no particular reason, I started blogging about it on Facebook, and evidently it caught other people’s interest, including Queen Gilyan’s. So I’ve decided to expand it into an article.

Please understand that I am *not* suggesting that the SCA should become more theatrical or modern. This paper is a light-hearted game, playing with some ideas, and not always seriously. But there are still things we can learn from the Hollywood presentations of our art.

Being a good ‘character actor’ and playing your ‘role’ in the SCA does not always mean doing exactly as a 16th (or early 17th) century nobleman from Spain, would do. If we want to make our point to an audience of people who were raised in the 20th century, and grew up watching swashbuckling movies, then sometimes we compromise what is period for what makes the right point for the people we are ‘dressing to impress.’ Sometimes you want to know what your real-life 16th century counterpart would do, say, or wear. Sometimes you just have to say WWEFD? What Would Errol Flynn Do?”

Lady Marie de Girau (de Girau)

A movie fight is not a real fight. It is not a competition. It is “an artistic imitation of an action’ (‘μίμησις πράξεως”) (Aristotle). Each move was rehearsed to work exactly as intended. This means, among other things, that absurd moves always work.

Daffy Duck: That’s funny; that never happens to Errol Flynn.
The Scarlet Pumpernickel, 1949 (Blanc, *The Scarlet Pumpernickel*)

In a very real sense, staged combat is the opposite of real combat. In actual combat, a combatant is trying to pull off a move so quick and subtle that it can be missed or misunderstood by a well-trained opponent three feet away, totally focused on the action as if his life depended on it (which of course it does). By contrast, a staged fight is composed of actions so slow and obvious that they can be understood by an untrained movie audience, not really focused on the blades, watching from the second balcony.

In the SCA, we are not choreographing fights as in the movies. Our primary goals are to win the fight, to honor the Queen and our lady (or lord), and our opponent. So why are we so often drawn to the fictionalized, choreographed duels in the movies?

Because they were carefully laid out, planned, and paced with the express purpose of entertaining the audience.

And so the first and greatest lesson that we are reminded of by watching movie fight scenes is that we are in fact performing for an audience. Yes, we want to win the fight. But winning the fight while doing something cool that everybody talks about later is much better than merely winning the fight in silence, and losing the fight while doing something cool that everybody talks about later is much better than merely losing the fight in silence.

Don Rafael Montero: I was merely playing to the crowd.

Don Pedro: And what are you doing now if not playing to the crowd?

The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Campbell)

(I also believe that sometimes losing the fight while doing something cool that everybody talks about later is often much better than merely winning the fight in silence. But that is an advanced lesson, usually much easier to understand and accept after you've fenced for a while and won your share of fights.)

Cardinal Richelieu: They have won, we have lost. The point, that is; the game continues.

The Three Musketeers, 1973, (Reed, Chamberlain and York).

Julio Scoundré! It doesn't matter if you win or lose, as long as you look really cool doing it.

The Order of the Stick #392, (Burlew)

Marsac: Better to die a musketeer than live like a dog.

The Musketeers, 2014 (Various)

So in this paper, which will be a work in progress forever (unless they stop making movies), I intend to discuss the lessons for SCA fighting that can be learned from the movies.

Please understand that I am not saying that you can learn to fight from the movies. You can't. You can be reminded of some fighting principles, you can learn some of the performing focus, you can be inspired to create a larger-than-life persona. But this will not replace learning your footwork, parries, and attacks.

On the Screen

Gene Kelly starred as (a way too old) D'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers* in 1948 (Turner and Kelly). In the first melee between D'Artagnan and the musketeers against the Cardinal's Guard, the lesson is that pedestrian swordplay plus exquisite footwork and balance can make an excellent fencer. And there are more ways to defeat your opponent than merely killing him. Also, Jean Heremans was a great fencing master, grossly underused.

Miyagi: Better learn balance. Balance is key. Balance good, karate good. Everything good.

Balance bad, better pack up, go home. Understand?

The Karate Kid, 1984 (Macchio and Morita)

Michael York played D'Artagnan in *The Three Musketeers* (Reed, Chamberlain and York) in 1973. In the initial melee of the musketeers against the Cardinal's Guard in that movie, (and in every fight scene in both that and its sequel), the lesson is that fencing is not merely a set of moves from a manual, like a dance, but a physically demanding activity, and you must be fully committed.

Red Sonja: You see, fencing and fighting are two different things. You need to learn them both.

Red Sonja, 1985 (Nielsen and Schwarzenegger)

Also, Bill Hobbs is one of the greatest fencing masters in the history of Hollywood. Finally, hold onto your weapon. Notice how many times Porthos manages lose his weapon in that fight. They are already setting up the joke for the final melee in the next movie.

Aramis: Only Porthos could invent a new way to disarm himself.
The Four Musketeers (York, Welch and Reed)

The tavern brawl reminds us better than any other scene that there is more going on than just the fight. Also, pay attention to the whole field. D'Artagnan eventually realizes what they're doing, and joins in.

And of course, the laundry room melee teaches us to wear our shirts in future with more respect.

That movie's 1974 sequel, *The Four Musketeers* (Lester) has a fight on ice. [I could say a melee, since there are at least four fighters, but I don't remember the action ever being more than one-on-one.] This fight demonstrates, as nothing else can, that when our footwork sucks, everything sucks.

And finally, we are taught to practice a move before using it for real. D'Artagnan's father shows him a move at the start of the movie, in a 17th century barn with a strobe light. [Don't blame me; I'm just reporting it.] The father performs it well, with good timing, a controlled roll, and the point on target. It's never referred to again, until D'Artagnan attempts it against Rochefort. He starts late, rolls awkwardly, and misses the target. Practice your moves. [Don't just spar. Drill specific moves.]

In the 1921 silent Douglas Fairbanks version of the iconic scene of the duels turning into a melee with the Cardinal's Guard (Fairbanks, *The Three Musketeers*), the clear lesson is that in a melee, you have allies, and you have as much responsibility to defend them as to defend yourself. [Indeed, this is the lesson in Dumas's novel as well.]

One for all, and all for one!
The Three Musketeers, 1844 (Dumas)

Also, in the book and nearly every filmed version, D'Artagnan wants to be a musketeer, so he is already trying to live up to the standards that his goal requires. And the lesson is to live up to what you want to be.

D'Artagnan: I have not the uniform, but I have the spirit. My heart is that of a Musketeer; I feel it, Monsieur, and that impels me on.
The Three Musketeers, 1844 (Dumas)

D'Artagnan: My father's sword! Now I have a legend to live up to.

Madame D'Artagnan: Use it well and wisely.

D'Artagnan: I will use it as my father would have - with honor and in the Queen's name.
At Sword's Point, 1952 (Wilde, O'Hara and Douglas)

The 1993 movie called *The Three Musketeers* (Sheen, Sutherland and O'Donnell), starring Chris O'Donnell as D'Artagnan, quickly diverged from Dumas's novel more than any previous Three Musketeers movie [except the Don Ameche farce (Ameche and Ritz Brothers) and the John Wayne serial (Wayne)]. But the initial melee is still there. The lesson learned watching D'Artagnan and the musketeers against the Cardinal's Guard is to fight *your* best fight, using your own skills and attributes. Porthos shouldn't fight like D'Artagnan. And while lots of toys will not make you a better fencer, they are certainly fun. Also, Bob Anderson is one of the greatest fencing masters in the history of Hollywood.

And in all versions of the lead-up to that melee, including the one in the novel, a crucial lesson is to be ready to face any opponents, regardless of their reputation.

D'Artagnan: My father recommended that I fight duels.

Athos: Well, let us hope you can do him some credit, hm?

The Three Musketeers, 1973 (Lester)

Don Ameche played D'Artagnan with the Ritz Brothers in *The Three Musketeers* in 1939 (Ameche and Ritz Brothers). The lesson from this movie is that if you turn your back on your opponent, he will wait for you to turn back before he attacks.... No, wait. We learn that if you splash hot soup on your opponents, everyone will conclude that you are great swordsmen. Ummm, no, that's not right either.

Forget it. There are no lessons from this farce. But it does have one redeeming feature. When the musketeers march on parade, they are actually carrying both their muskets and their musket rests, just as if they were actually, you know, musketeers.

The Lady Musketeer (Amy, York and Depardieu) was a rather pedestrian made-for-TV movie from 2004. Many of the fencing scenes are badly edited, and hard to follow. The lesson from watching the movie is that if the audience can't follow the action, then it's less fun for them, so make what happens on the field clear and unambiguous. The lesson from the filming of the movie is to accept any challenge put before you: Peter Hric had to be swordmaster for Michael York, in a role he'd done three times under Bill Hobbs, and for John Rhys Davies, immediately after three movies with Bob Anderson.

Hawkins: Caution is for popinjays and cockatoos!

The Court Jester, 1955 (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone)

In the 1994 Sophie Marceau film *La fille de d'Artagnan* (Marceau and Noiret), called *Revenge of the Musketeers* in English, fencing masters Claude and Michel Carliez showed a reality of 17th century dueling often neglected in films, as a mish-mosh of secret moves and attacks, some of which work, and some of which don't. In the final duel between Eloise d'Artagnan and the villain, the lesson is to remember where the sun is, when it's low in the sky. Many SCA rapier fighters fail to do so.

In 2001, Peter Hyams directed *The Musketeer* (Chambers and Roth). It was an interesting mix of 17th century fencing and modern Eastern martial arts movie moves. So it's kind of hard to find anything to learn from the fight scenes, except perhaps that you can do a lot more if you keep your balance. But really, don't try to fence that way; gravity is not optional. Also, Xin-Xin Xiong, stunt choreographer, is excellent at what he does – but what he does is not fencing.

In *Scaramouche* (1952), with Stewart Granger (Granger, Leigh and Parker, *Scaramouche*), the lesson is to know and use the entire terrain on which you fight. And be prepared for a long fight. Also, Fred Cavens is one of the greatest fencing masters in the history of Hollywood. [By the way, using large amounts of varied terrain seems to be a Stewart Granger specialty. He does the same thing in the 1952 film *The Prisoner of Zenda* (Granger and Kerr, *The Prisoner of Zenda*), and Don Iago (Cabrera de Cadiz) points out that he does it again in the 1962 *Swordsman from Siena* (Granger and Koscina, *Swordsman of Sienna*)].

Pedigore: A sword is like a bird. If you clutch it too tightly, you choke it; too lightly and it flies away.

(Sidney, *Scaramouche*)

The novel *Scaramouche* (Sabatini, *Scaramouche*) was written by Rafael Sabatini, as were several other great swashbuckling novels – *Captain Blood* (Sabatini, *Captain Blood*), *Master at Arms* (Sabatini, *The Marquis of Carabas, or The Master-at-Arms*) and others. The fencing scenes in both *Scaramouche* and *Master-At-Arms*

remind us that the talented amateur is not the equal of a professional who fences all day every day.

The absurd farce of a fencing scene between Basil Rathbone and Danny Kaye in *The Court Jester* (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone) doesn't look like it would have any lesson for a serious fencer, but it does. You can be as good – or as bad – as you believe you are. Also, Ralph Faulkner is one of the greatest fencing masters in the history of Hollywood.

Tyrone Power and John Sutton fight a rapier and dagger duel in a prison cell in the 1947 *Captain from Castile* (Power, Peters and Romero, *Captain from Castile*). The lesson is to make your parries when you can't retreat, and always follow with a riposte. Also, you should credit your fencing master. (This fight also has the most chilling ending, totally unsuitable for SCA use.) As Mistress Adelaide de Beaumont points out, never assume your opponent is helpless (Theriot). Finally, just because somebody is a joker when you first meet him, don't assume that he can't be a strong, dynamic, swashbuckling figure.

Zach Biggs: It's spelled 'riposte'. It has R.I.P. in it.
Private conversation, May 18, 2013

Louis Hayward starred in several swashbucklers, and is the only actor to have played D'Artagnan (Hayward, *Lady in the Iron Mask*), Captain Blood (Hayward, *Fortunes of Captain Blood*), Edmond Dantes (Hayward, *The Return of Monte Cristo*), and Louis XIV / Phillippe (Hayward, *The Man in the Iron Mask*). But I can't remember a single notable fight, memorable line or compelling scene, and many people have never heard of him. The lesson is to improve your fencing, your dialogue, and your presence if you want people to notice you.

Duke de Lorca: Tell me, Don Juan, do you hire men to spread the words of your romantic conquests?

Don Juan: No, Your Excellency, that's a service that's always been done for me free of charge.
The Adventures of Don Juan, 1948 (Flynn, Lindfors and Hale, *The Adventures of Don Juan*)

In 1979, the Louis Hayward script for *The Man in the Iron Mask* was remade as *The Fifth Musketeer* (Annakin). The cast included Beau Bridges, Sylvia Kristel, Ursula Andress, Cornell Wilde, José Ferrer, Alan Hale Jr., Lloyd Bridges, Rex Harrison and Olivia de Havilland. Despite the star-studded cast, it was an uninspired, average swashbuckler. The lesson is that it's not enough to make a reputation. You will be judged on how well you can live up to it.

I urge you to watch Will Turner vs. Commodore Norrington vs. Capt. Jack Sparrow in the 2006 film *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (Depp, Bloom and Knightley), from the beach, through the jungle to the mill, and back on the water wheel. There's no lesson for real fighting here - it's just fencing porn.

Elizabeth Swann: [indignantly] No! This is barbaric! This is no way for grown men to settle... oh, fine! Let's just haul out our swords and start banging away at each other! That will solve everything! I've had it! I've had it with wobbly-legged, rum-soaked pirates!

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, 2006 (Depp, Bloom and Knightley)

The first well-known swashbuckler was the 1920 film *The Mark of Zorro* (Fairbanks and Motte, *The Mark of Zorro*). There are two lessons from this movie. First, you aren't merely trying to win the fight; you're also trying to win over the audience. Zorro is always playing to the crowd. Second, it really helps to be able to out-run, out-leap, and out-lunge your opponent. Also, vigorous, impressive physical movement helps make a swashbuckling hero, without need of words.

Hubert Hawkins: He never walks when he can leap; he never flees when he can fight.

The Court Jester, 1955 (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone)

In *Don Q, Son of Zorro* (Fairbanks, Astor and Crisp, *Don Q, Son of Zorro*), Douglas Fairbanks plays both the son and the father. When the old Zorro appears masked and helps his son fight soldiers, his son doesn't recognize him – until he carves a Z on somebody's cheek. The lesson here is that the old guy can still fight, and win. Also, get a badge, register it, and use it. It pays dividends to have a personal symbol that everyone recognizes.

For years I have enjoyed the 1950 *Cyrano de Bergerac* with Jose Ferrer (Ferrer, Powers and Prince). The lesson of the first act is to be a poet as well as a fencer. The second act shows us that a noble man uses his skills for others, not just himself. [These are also lessons from the play by Edmond Rostand (Rostand), and from the life of the historical Cyrano de Bergerac. Yes, he really existed. He was a poet and playwright, and he actually once fought 100 men alone, in defense of a friend, and won.]

Jason Nesmith: Never give up. Never surrender!
Galaxy Quest, 1999 (Allen, Weaver and Rickman)

The lesson from the 1990 French language version of *Cyrano de Bergerac*, starring Gerard Depardieu (Depardieu, Brochet and Perez), is to learn French. The ending of Rostand's play (the base script for both movies) is lame in English, and carries great meaning in French, because *panache* in French means both white plume and panache.

The first of the great talkie swashbucklers was Errol Flynn's first movie, *Captain Blood*, in 1935 (Flynn, Haviland and Rathbone, *Captain Blood*). The lesson of the fight between Captain Blood and Levasseur (or any early Errol Flynn fight scene) is that, in Hollywood at least, if your heart is true, and you're fighting for the lady's honor, and you are tall and handsome and graceful, it doesn't matter that you *can't fence*. [This is not a lesson for the SCA. Your heart should be as true as Captain Blood's, you should fight for the lady's honor like Captain Blood, you should be as graceful and dashing as you can, but unlike Flynn, you should also learn to fence.]

Le Bret: This latest pose of yours . . . becomes exaggerated.
Cyrano: Then I exaggerate! There are things in this world a man does well to extremes.
Cyrano de Bergerac (Rostand)

Errol Flynn's fencing isn't the focus anyway - his character's wit and chivalry are. And this is the true lesson of any swashbuckling film. How much of the movie is fencing, and how much is talking? Now, how much of an SCA event is fencing, and how much is talking?

Elizabeth Swann: You will listen to me! LISTEN! The other ships will still be looking to us, to the Black Pearl, to lead, and what will they see? Frightened bilgerats aboard a derelict ship? No, no they will see free men and freedom! And what the enemy will see, they will see the flash of our cannons, and they will hear the ringing of our swords, and they will know what we can do! By the sweat of our brow and the strength of our backs and the courage in our hearts! Gentlemen, hoist the colors!
Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End, 2007 (Verbinski, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*)

The 1940 film *The Sea Hawk* (Flynn and Marshall, *The Sea Hawk*) is one of Errol Flynn's best swashbucklers, though there is more ship-to-ship combat than individual fighting. A lesson from the final fight scene, of Captain Thorpe vs. several soldiers, is that when you are fighting several against one, don't line up in his front – spread out. Make him look in more than one direction. [They don't. They die.] The conclusion of that fight, with Thorpe vs. Wolfingham, reminds us that just because you have fallen, you shouldn't drop your guard. While the fight is going on, defend yourself. (And a successful parry from the ground always looks impressive.) The movie also reminds us that not everyone from my kingdom is right, and not everyone from the other kingdom is wrong.

Also, it's an intriguing contrast with earlier Flynn movies. By now his fencing is much better, and his stance is good. But Henry Daniell, who played Wolfingham, could hardly fence at all. So this fight is a reversal of Flynn's fights with Basil Rathbone, and the directors are careful to show Flynn's face most of the time, using a double for Daniell. It's now Flynn's job to cover for Daniell's poor fencing. And the lesson is that if you practice you can get better, and it will be your responsibility to help the newer fencers as you were helped when you were new.

Finally, according to movie scholars, Flynn was very impressed with Flora Robson, who played Queen Elizabeth. In scenes with her, he showed up on time, up on his lines, and sober. And so we learn that the inspiration of the Queen is real, and can help us become better than we are.

Leicester: She is the Queen. The greatest joy of my lifetime has been to serve her. And so will you find it.

Fire Over England, 1937 (Robson and Olivier)

You should watch Robin Hood and Little John fighting on the bridge with quarterstaves, in almost any Robin Hood movie. (Even in the 1964 comedy *Robin and the Seven Hoods* (Sinatra, Martin and Davis Jr.), Robbo and Littlejohn compete with sticks when they meet.) The lesson is that the stranger who comes up and challenges you and beats you can become one of your truest friends.

Athos: What an absolute madman. You know, I'm beginning to form a positive affection for you.

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Turner and Kelly)

The greatest moments in the Gabriel Byrne *Man in the Iron Mask* (DiCaprio, Irons and Malkovich) are all in the final climactic fight. The lesson is that four men with swords vs. twenty with muskets can win, if they are heroes. Don Thorland (O'Shea) points out the quote right before the fight that explains it: "They're young Musketeers. They've been weaned on our legends. They revere us. It is an *advantage*." Magnificent valor!

Lt. Andre: All my life, all I wanted to be – was him.

The Man in the Iron Mask, 1998 (DiCaprio, Irons and Malkovich)

Another lesson from that movie is that the one man most truly loyal to the King is neither blind nor a slave. True loyalty does not mean he follows the King into bad decisions; it means he tries to hold the king back, and change his mind.

Mistress Serena Lascelles adds, "... and the lesson from *Game of Thrones* (Headey, Dinklage and Williams) is that this will sometimes get you killed." (Lascelles)

[Of course, one lesson from *Game of Thrones* is that almost anything can get you killed.]

The 1974 Polish film *The Deluge* (Olbrychski, Braunek and Lomnicki) has an excellent saber duel, in which the expert never once loses control of the fight. The lesson is that nothing, nothing, *NOTHING* replaces having the highest level of skill.

Chevalier Saint-Gilles: You teach me that mastery, after all, is for masters.

Master-at-Arms, (Sabatini, The Marquis of Carabas, or The Master-at-Arms)

The lesson from the 1936 *Romeo and Juliet* (Shearer, Howard and Barrymore) is that it doesn't matter how bad your overall record is – you can still win today's fight. (It contains the only onscreen duel that Basil Rathbone ever won.) Also, no matter your background, you can fit into the period if you want to. [Andy Devine plays a very credible servant, even though I'd never seen him before without a cowboy hat and western accent.] This movie also has some of Fred Cavens's best work. Romeo (Leslie Howard) vs. Tybalt (Rathbone), has some

excellent dagger parries and almost the only competent cloakwork I've seen in a filmed fight scene. [The best capework I have ever seen on film is in the 1941 Tyrone Power film *Blood and Sand* (Power, Darnell and Hayworth, *Blood and Sand*). I guess it technically counts as a sword fight, since the winner eventually dispatched his opponent with a sword, but it's really bull-fighting.]

The lesson from the 1968 *Romeo and Juliet* (Whiting and Hussey) is that the new guy might be pretty good. The role of Tybalt is played by a young unknown named Michael York. The fight arranger is Nicolo Perno, a classical Italian fencing master with no other movie credits I can find.

In the 1977 film *The Man in the Iron Mask* (Chamberlain, McGoohan and Jourdan), starring Richard Chamberlain, the most important lesson is the one that D'Artagnan teaches Phillipe:

D'Artagnan: If you are to rule this great nation, you must learn restraint. Keep cool in battle, or in sports. Be angry - but in cold blood.

The Man in the Iron Mask, 1977 (Chamberlain, McGoohan and Jourdan)

Don Diego de la Vega: Lesson number one: never attack in anger.

The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

The best fencing scene in *The Princess Bride* (Elwes, Patinkin and Wright) is Inigo vs. the Man in Black at the top of the Cliffs of Insanity. It teaches us to learn to use either hand. And don't assume that your opponent can't. [Watch carefully near the end of that duel. When the two fighters pass each other, the Man in Black switches his sword to his left hand for a few seconds to keep it between himself and his opponent.]

Athos: I fight just as well with my left hand. If you find that this places you at a disadvantage, I do apologize.

The Three Musketeers, 1973 (Reed, Chamberlain and York)

Athos: You'll find the left hand most confusing.

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Turner and Kelly)

Also, it's not enough to learn Bonetti, or Capo Ferro, or Tybalt. Your opponent may have-a studied his Agrippa. Finally, respect and cherish the artist who is your opponent.

The next scene is a fight between the Man in Black and Fezzik. The lesson here is that you can always choose to fight in a more sportsmanlike way.

The duel between Baron Von Stuppe vs. The Great Leslie in the 1965 film *The Great Race* (Curtis, Wood and Lemmon) teaches us to be able to handle any weapon. (Also, as wonderful as fencing is, a pie fight is funnier.) And the ending of the movie is a wonderful example that winning the competition is not what matters most.

Maggie DuBois: You lost.

Leslie: Only the race.

The Great Race, 1965, (Curtis, Wood and Lemmon).

Having said that, however, the lesson from the duel between the Mountain and Prince Oberyn Martell in *Game of Thrones* (Various) is that even if you have another agenda, it's imperative to keep your focus on winning the fight.

The lesson from *The Dueling Cavalier* (Lockwood and Lamont) is that when there's a change in your craft, you must adapt or die.

Casanova's Big Night (McLeod) is a 1954 Bob Hope comedy. The only lesson you can wring out of it is to use all the skills and assets you have available. They didn't. There are roughly two dozen people involved in swordplay - none of them Basil Rathbone, who played Casanova's servant. Don't make this mistake; use your best fencing skills. [The first duel, however, showcases the fencing skills of Vincent Price, playing Casanova.]

And there's an important SCA lesson to be learned from the 1993 *Jurassic Park* (Neill, Dern and Goldblum). [What? It has fencing - lots of electrified fencing.] The lesson is that you can't count on the list ropes alone to keep the field safe.

The lesson from Roadrunner cartoons (Jones) is that the most complicated plans generally don't work. Keep it simple.

Alejandro Murrieta: The pointy end goes into the other man.
The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

Jon Snow: Stick them with the pointy end!
Game of Thrones TV series, 2012, (Headey, Dinklage and Williams). Recommended by
Bosco Scelesti (Scelesti)

In 2012, I watched the Rangers lose the division title to the A's, on the last day of the season, having been in first place since the first. The lesson is that a great beginning isn't enough; you have to finish well, too.

In 1940, *The Mark of Zorro* was remade starring Tyrone Power (Power, Darnell and Rathbone, *The Mark of Zorro*). In the climactic fight scene, Basil Rathbone as Captain Esteban fights Tyrone Power as Don Diego, *not* dressed as Zorro, and known to everyone as a defenseless fop. Remember that you are who you are and what you do, not what they happen to think of you. Also, the ending of that fight should remind us that how it looks, even after the fight ends, can be impressive and symbolic. [As Diego's enemy falls and dies, a picture on the wall falls off, revealing a previously carved "Z".]

The lesson from the 1998 film *The Mask of Zorro* (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones) is that the pointy end goes in the other fighter, and any fencing theory not aimed at that goal is wrong. Nonetheless, you will learn much faster and better if you find a master.

Elena: I have had the proper instruction since I was four.
The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

Don Diego de la Vega: There is a saying, a very old saying: when the pupil is ready the master will appear.
The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

It also teaches the dangers of bragging.

Alejandro Murrieta: I have never lost a fight.
Don Diego de la Vega: Except to a crippled old man, just now.
The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

You can also learn, with a little digging, that historical research can add greatly to your fun. There really were outlaws named Three-Fingered Jack and Joaquin Murrieta, captured by an actual Captain Love, who preserved their hand and head respectively in jars. They were on display in a museum in San Francisco until they were lost in the 1906 earthquake (S. Curtis).

Hawkins: We did research. Authenticity was a must.

Zooks! Did we search, and what did we find? (Ah-choo!) A lot of dust!

The Court Jester, 1955 (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone)

In 1952, *At Sword's Point* (Wilde, O'Hara and Douglas) came out, starring Cornel Wilde as D'Artagnan Jr. and Maureen O'Hara as Clare, the daughter of Athos. The two most obvious lessons are that heroes get old, and the youngsters who appear later need to take up their mantle, in service to the Queen. Also, a lady can wield a sword and be a hero just as well as a lord. And when the Queen (or King) calls, you answer.

Aramis: When the king sends us on campaign, does he give us his reasons? He says, "Porthos, fight," and you fight.

Porthos: Oh, I do, I do.

Aramis: Then let's go and be killed where we're told to. Is life worth so many questions?

The Three Musketeers, 1973 (Reed, Chamberlain and York).

Athos: To die among friends. Can a man ask more? Can the world offer less? Who wants to live 'till the last bottle is empty? It's all for one, D'Artagnan, and one for all.

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Turner and Kelly)

The first filmed fencing scene (that I can track down) is the 1900 film *Le duel d'Hamlet* (Bernhardt), a two minute film of the dueling scene at the end of Hamlet, starring Sarah Bernhardt as Hamlet. The dialog was recorded separately, which means that one of the first movie scenes with sound was a fencing scene. Once again we are shown that a lady can fight as well as any man. [The sound track has been lost, but the film can be seen on Youtube.com.]

The 1966 BBC mini-series *The Three Musketeers* (Brett and Blessed) shows us to learn from those who came before. It's very clear that George MacDonald Fraser had seen this when he wrote the Michael York movies.

In the obscure *Five Swords for Justice*, we learn not to believe everything our friends tell us, but to go find the truth for ourselves.

The lesson from the gunfight in the 1962 film *The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance* (Stewart, Wayne and Miles) is that they will remember what they saw, whether it was the exact truth or not. And that standing up to a challenge can be more important than merely overcoming it. Finally, when your enemy is helpless, don't stand there and brag; finish him off. You may not be able to see what's coming.

The lesson from Fred Astaire and the hatrack in the 1951 film *Royal Wedding* (Astaire, Powell and Lawford) is that it's not all about you. There are two of you out there, and it's your responsibility to help the other one look good too, regardless of your relative levels of skill.

The lesson from the 1964 *Robin and the Seven Hoods* (Sinatra, Martin and Davis Jr.) is that it doesn't have to be completely period to be fun. Also, as Mistress Serena (Lascelles) points out, the princess will grow up to be the queen, and own us all.

By contrast, we learn from the 1963 film *The Castilian* (Setó) that putting on a costume is not enough; you must also train. Frankie Avalon's fighting is ... no better than you expect Frankie Avalon's fighting to be. That movie also teaches us both to be proud of maintaining a period ambiance, and that it is not easy to do. Their advertising emphasized that the movie was filmed where the actual events took place, and the occasionally forced camera angles show that they were having trouble avoiding signs of modernity.

The lesson from the 1934 *Three Musketeers* (Wayne) with John Wayne is that some ideas just don't work. There should never have been a *Three Musketeers* with John Wayne.

In the 1950 movie *Treasure Island* (Haskin), Robert Newton invented a new voice characterization, to distinguish Long John Silver from all other pirate characters. It was so successful, and so memorable, that this voice is what people think all pirates sound like now. "Arrr!" And the lesson is to be yourself, but work to be as flashy and memorable as possible. If people start copying you, you've succeeded.

That film character was so successful, that it spawned a television show, *The Adventures of Long John Silver* (Sholem and Haskin, *The Adventures of Long John Silver*). In one episode, there were several opportunities for fencing. In an armed robbery, a murder, an arrest of Long John, a capture of an outlaw, a breakout from jail, a break into the tavern, and a kidnapping, you will not see one single implausible or unrealistic fencing move. That's probably because not one pirate, thief, or guardsman is carrying a sword.

So I guess the lesson for SCA fencers is this: the only way to avoid making any mistakes on the field is to not fence at all. So go ahead and fence, and don't worry about making mistakes. [Just learn from them.]

"El Kabong" (Butler) shows us that it's not enough to learn the rapier; we should learn all weapons and combinations.

Edna Mode, in the 2004 film *The Incredibles* (Bird), explains why it's important to make sure your fighting gear never impedes your movement.

Edna Mode: No capes!
The Incredibles (Bird)

The lesson from *Robin Hood Daffy* (1958) (Blanc) is that while planning a long, elaborate sequence of moves, remember that a simple move from your opponent can change the result.

Daffy Duck: Ho! Ha ha! Guard! Turn! Parry! Dodge! Spin! Ha! Thrust!
"Robin Hood Daffy", 1958 (Blanc)

The lesson from the Yoda vs. Count Dooku fight in the 2002 film *Star Wars Episode II – Attack of the Clones* (Christensen, Portman and MacGregor) is to fight your own best style, using all the skills you have. [Screw Di Grassi. I wanna fight like Yoda!]

John: [upon meeting Peter] You offend reason, sir. [Sees him fly] I should like to offend it with you
Peter Pan, 2003 (Sumter, Hurd-Wood and Isaacs)

And of course the lesson from all movie fight scenes is that it's not enough to win the fight. People have to enjoy watching you do it.

Before the Tourney

Why are you fencing in the SCA? If you just wanted to win fencing bouts, there are lots of places you can do that without wearing funny clothes or bowing to other people. But for most of us, we want something more, something that the SCA can give us that modern fencing, or even many historical fencing groups, cannot provide.

What did I want?

I wanted a Roc's egg. I wanted a harem loaded with lovely odalisques less than the dust beneath my chariot wheels, the rust that never stained my sword. I wanted raw red gold in nuggets the size of your fist and feed that lousy claim jumper to the huskies! I wanted to get up feeling brisk and go out and break some lances, then pick a likely wench for my droit du seigneur--I wanted to stand up to the Baron and dare him to touch my wench! I wanted to hear the purple water chuckling against the skin of the Nancy Lee in the cool of the morning watch and not another sound, nor any movement save the slow tilting of the wings of the albatross that had been pacing us the last thousand miles.

I wanted the hurtling moons of Barsoom. I wanted Storisende and Poictesme, and Holmes shaking me awake to tell me, "The game's afoot!" I wanted to float down the Mississippi on a raft and elude a mob in company with the Duke of Bilgewater and the Lost Dauphin.

I wanted Prestor John, and Excalibur held by a moon-white arm out of a silent lake. I wanted to sail with Ulysses and with Tros of Samothrace and eat the lotus in a land that seemed always afternoon. I wanted the feeling of romance and the sense of wonder I had known as a kid. I wanted the world to be what they had promised me it was going to be--instead of the tawdry, lousy, fouled-up mess it is.

Oscar Gordon, *Glory Road* (Heinlein)

If Heinlein's quote left you cold, if you just want to be a successful athlete, if the kingdoms and the crowns and the costumes and the made-up names of the SCA have no value for you, then this paper probably won't, either. Just work on your parries, footwork, and attacks, and I hope you have fun. But if you want to salute your inspiration, if you want to be known for honor as well as prowess, if you want people to be excited when you walk on the field, then you need more.

Don Diego de la Vega: You have passion, Alejandro, and your skill is growing. But to enter Montero's world, I must give you something which is completely beyond your reach.

Alejandro Murrieta: Ah, yes? And what is that?

Don Diego de la Vega: Charm.

The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

So how do you use this for SCA fighting? You need to start long before the fight. The great movie actors work for weeks or months to develop their dashing personas, and so should you.

Get in better shape. Remember the exhausting duel between D'Artagnan and Rochefort near the end of *The Four Musketeers* (Lester). You're going to get tired out there. You'd better be able to fight when exhausted.

You can't move like Douglas Fairbanks, Errol Flynn, or Gene Kelly if your muscles aren't up to it. And you can't quip if you are out of breath.

Don Diego: Well, if you were Zorro, you would not have to walk through the gate. You could fly over the wall! Isn't that what he does?

Sgt. Garcia: Of course! You know, it's strange, Don Diego. Every time I talk to you, I get such wonderful ideas! I will climb over the rear wall!

[hesitates]

Sgt. Garcia: I cannot climb the rear wall. I have tried.

Captain James Hook: [to Peter, in disbelief] Is it you? My great and worthy opponent? But it can't be. Not this pitiful, spineless, pasty, bloated codfish I see before me. You're not even a shadow of Peter Pan.

Hook, 1991 (Williams and Hoffman)

But having said that, merely being in the best shape does not guarantee that you are the better fighter.

Practice your parries. You can do so much more if you believe you will survive the next few seconds.

Don Diego de la Vega: Do you know how to use that thing?

Alejandro Murrieta: Yes. The pointy end goes into the other man.

Don Diego de la Vega: [sighs] This is going to take a lot of work.

The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

Also, work on your attacks. Don't just spar at practice. Work on specific moves. Get so that your lunge, your disengages, your combinations are as automatic as you can make them, hard-wired into your memory, so that you can count on your best moves at all times

Prolog: Each tried and true effect for the umpteenth time we resurrect.

The Court Jester, 1955 (Frank and Panama)

Your fighting persona and verve are a part of you wherever you are. You can be just as courageous, dashing and heroic off the field as on it. Go ahead – make the grand gesture.

Antoninus (first): I'm Spartacus!

Spartacus, 1960 (Douglas, Olivier and Simmons)

And do more than fence. Your swashbuckling persona can influence your actions at all times.

Porthos: A lively tune... I'm inspired to dance!

The Three Musketeers, 1993 (Sheen, Sutherland and O'Donnell)

Hawkins: What manner of man is Giacomo? Ha ha! I shall tell you what manner of man is he. He lives for a sigh, he dies for a kiss, he lusts for a laugh, ha! He never walks when he can leap! He never flees when he can fight! And he swoons at the beauty of a rose.

The Court Jester, 1955 (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone)

Focus on the things that can make your persona stand out.

Jack Sparrow: We are very much alike, you and I, I and you... us.

Elizabeth Swann: Oh. Except for a sense of honor and decency and a moral center. And personal hygiene.

Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest, 2006 (Depp, Bloom and Knightley)

Improve your entire kit. It serves more than just yourself.

Bunny Wigglesworth: If I'm going to be this Zorro chappie, I want to make more of a statement.

Zorro, the Gay Blade, 1981 (Medak)

King Louis XIII: Get this fellow some decent clothes. How can I face Richelieu when my men don't wear decent clothes?

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Turner and Kelly)

And make sure you keep your kit in good shape. This is as important as your inspiration and ideals

Letter: The sword, with which to fight injustice. This mask, with which to deceive tyranny. And this hat, which needs... reblocking.

Zorro, the Gay Blade, 1981 (Medak)

Viveca: Don't mess ... with the dress!

Barbie and the Three Musketeers, 2009 (Lau)

To be a dashing figure on the field starts long before you get to the field. You need to build a persona that is grander, nobler, more dashing, than you could ever be. Then you live up to it.

Don Diego Vega: What Diego can't do, Zorro can!

Zorro's Fighting Legion, 1939, (English and Witney)

Pippo Popolino: What's Casanova got that, if I had, I probably couldn't handle anyway?

Casanova's Big Night, 1954, (McLeod)

On the Field

Griselda: "You are a figure of romance, of spirit and action, but at the same time, humble and tender. You are a man of iron, with the soul of a poet. You are adventurous, gay, but with a lover's melancholy. And above all, you must show passion.

The Court Jester, 1955 (Frank and Panama)

So how do you use this in an actual SCA fight, without giving up a large chance of losing the bout?

The first answer is to stop worrying about giving up a large chance of losing the bout. You will lose dozens of bouts. If you have a great fencing career, you will lose thousands.

D'Artagnan's father: Get into trouble. Make mistakes. Fight, love, live.

The Three Musketeers, 2011 (Lerman, Macfadyen and Stevenson)

Richelieu: I never acknowledge defeat; I make use of it.

The Three Musketeers, 1921 (Fairbanks, *The Three Musketeers*)

Will Turner: This is either madness... or brilliance.

Jack Sparrow: It's remarkable how often those two traits coincide.

Pirates of the Caribbean: The Curse of the Black Pearl, 2003 (Depp, Bloom and Knightley, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*)

"We won the Battle of San Jacinto, but movies are made about the Alamo."

Cedric Fiðelere (Fiðelere)

Then start learning how to do your persona play away from the engagement. Don't be afraid to move. Learn to talk while fencing. Then add both movement and speech when you're out of range and it doesn't cost you anything tactical.

Long John Silver: Arrrr, fortune rides the shoulders of them what schemes.

Long John Silver, 1954 (Newton)

When the fight starts, be absolutely focused on your parries. Play all you like in the lead up, but you need to be sure that whatever game you're playing does not keep you from fighting at your best.

Aramis: He was sober enough when he came on guard.
The Three Musketeers, 1973 (Lester)

And if you want to say something, be prepared to back out of range. You can almost always arrange ten seconds that aren't really fighting, between passes.

D'Artagnan: Prepare to fight. One of us dies today.
Aramis: Now that's the way to make an entrance.
The Musketeers 2014 (Various)

The crucial idea is to fence for the audience, as well as for the win. (Don't forget to fight for the win, as well as the audience, though.] Make it worth watching - that's what makes a good movie fencing scene. And yes, people will watch, and remember.

"Come, come, enough of such compliments!" cried Porthos. "Remember, we are waiting for our turns."
"Speak for yourself when you are inclined to utter such incongruities," interrupted Aramis.
"For my part, I think what they say is very well said, and quite worthy of two gentlemen."
The Three Musketeers, 1844 (Dumas)

When your opponent asks you to yield, find a new and impressive way to do it. Persona play is free here; he's not going to attack until you answer him. Perhaps don't yield to him (or her¹), yield to his lady (or lord). If you refuse to yield, don't just say "no", say, "I'm fighting for the Queen!" Or better yet, come up with your own dashing phrase.

Rocheport: Let's see if you're as brave a man as your father was. And as foolish.
The Three Musketeers, 1993 (Herek)

If he yields, compliment his honor to the Queen and all the spectators. If he refuses to, compliment his courage. But whatever happens, don't lose an opportunity to say something worthwhile.

Cyrano: You might have said a great many things. Why waste your opportunity?
Cyrano de Bergerac, 1897 (Rostand)

When there's a break in the action, compliment his parry, or his attack. When he tosses his dagger, salute his chivalry. You should do this in addition to, not instead of, tactical thinking. The more automatic your compliments become, the less they interfere with your fighting.

Porthos: You're reckless, arrogant, impetuous, probably dead by sundown, but I like you, lad.
The Three Musketeers, 2011 (Lerman, Macfadyen and Stevenson)

Salute the Queen, your inspiration, and your opponent each fight, whether they are doing the salutes or not. Salute your opponent's lady (or lord) as well as your own. Get into the entire SCA ambience – the tourney, the

¹ I'm assuming a male opponent for this discussion, for grammatical ease. All compliments and honor apply equally to ladies, of course.

court, the costumes, the banners flying in the wind, the sun shining down on the field – all of it. Make it real to yourself, so you can make it real to everyone else. The field should be a grand, glorious place to do what you love.

Dawg: Love. Who can explain it?
Cutthroat Island, 1995 (Davis and Modine)

Yes, it's just a movie, but ... the more you can feel like it's not a movie, the better the movie.
Viggo Mortenson, *Reclaiming the Blade*, 2009 (Davies and Mortenson)

Yes, it's just a game, but ... the more you can feel like it's not a game, the better the game.

Talk to your opponent before the bout. If you don't know him, learn who he is, where he's from. Make him part of what you're doing. [Besides the courtesy involved, and the fact that it improves the performance, there's good tactical information contained in where he's from, how long he's fenced, and who is training him.]

Porthos: Everyone acquainted? [They unsheathe and stand en garde.] *Now*, we are prepared to resist you!
The Three Musketeers, 1993 (Herek)

When you win, do it with style. When you lose, do it with a becoming grace.

Lady de Winter: Your Eminence is a great player - great enough to lose. I do not like to lose.
Cardinal Richelieu: You must suit yourself, Milady. But if in the end you should, do it with a becoming grace.
The Three Musketeers, 1973, (Reed, Chamberlain and York)

Richelieu's final scene in the book *The Three Musketeers* (Dumas) and any movie version that takes us to the end of Dumas's story (1921, 1948, 1974, 2013, etc.) shows how impressive and memorable it is when the loser calls the blow with grace and style.

Done well, these things really don't affect your tactical effectiveness. Mostly they are done before the fight, during holds, out of range, after the blow is struck, or as you walk off the field. The most crucial skill to develop is the ability to shift gears quickly, so you can toss off a gallant phrase, and then get back into the fight.

Hawkins: I'd like to get in, get on with it, get it over with, and get out. Get it?
Ravenhurst: Got it.
Hawkins: Good.
The Court Jester, 1955 (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone)

The advantage from your opponent not understanding what you're actually doing can be seen in the first fight in the 2013 Spanish series *Captain Alatriste* (Various). At first, Alatriste looks like he's making a mistake; it seems that he is parrying with the blade but only attacking with fists and kicks. Eventually it becomes clear that he's doing it on purpose – he's not trying to kill the hired guards. But the guards don't know that, and are defending against his blade.

Besides, after a little practice, you can stop worrying (as much) about distracting yourself by talking when out of range. Since your opponent doesn't know what you're going to say, or when you intend to finish, it's at least as distracting for him. This takes courage, by the way, but it's worth it.

Dr. Peter Blood: Nuttall, me lad, there's just one other little thing. Do you think you could find me a good stout piece of timber? About so thick and so long?

Honesty Nuttall: Yes, I think so.

Dr. Peter Blood: Then do so and lash it to your spine - it needs stiffening.

Captain Blood, 1935 (Flynn, Haviland and Rathbone, *Captain Blood*)

But sometimes, go ahead and do something tactically foolish, and accept that it may cost you a fight. The entertainment it brings, and the reputation it can earn, is worth more, and lasts longer, than today's victory.

Lord Willoughby: He's chivalrous to the point of idiocy.

Captain Blood, 1935, (Flynn, Haviland and Rathbone, *Captain Blood*)

Hawkins: I'm proud to recall that at no time at all

With no other recourses but my own resources,

With firm application and determination...

I made a fool of myself!

The Court Jester, 1955 (Kaye, Johns and Rathbone)

Miss Ma'amselle Hepzibah: Sense! Phaugh! We speak of honair, M'sieu, not sense!

Walt Kelly, *Outrageously Pogo* (Kelly)

Another important lesson from the book *The Three Musketeers* (Dumas) comes from the scene of the defense of the bastion at La Rochelle. This scene is particularly well filmed in the 1974 movie *The Four Musketeers* (Lester) and in the Russian Language mini-series *Три мускетера* (*Three Musketeers*) from 2013 (Zhigunov). What this shows us is that if you take on the impossible challenge just out of swank, then they won't guess what you're really up to. Among other things, this is a way that being more flamboyant or dashing can actually help you in combat, by distracting your opponent from his defense – *as long as it never distracts you from yours*.

Athos: Somebody who would challenge the three of us is a fool – or a champion. I intend to see.

The Three Musketeers, 1935 (Lee)

Athos: We'll make an excellent impression. They will take us for either madmen or heroes – two classes of fools who very much resemble each other.

The Three Musketeers, 1966 (Hammond)

So find a grandiose way to phrase your words.

Barbossa: I'm disinclined to acquiesce to your request. Means "no".

Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl, 2003 (Verbinski, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*)

And don't get ahead of yourself. No matter what great swashbuckling moment you hope to create, stay focused on the immediate danger. You can't pull off your move if you miss a parry first.

D'Artagnan: Well, Athos, in a matter of hours we'll be on the road to Spain with a price on our heads. Will we live to see France again?

Athos: Will we live to see Spain?

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Sidney)

Fight to win. That has to remain your primary goal.

Prudy: You gonna kill another man?

Jason McCullough: Well, I'm sure we all hope it turns out that way.

Support Your Local Sheriff, 1969 (Kennedy)

Believe in the kingdom. Believe in the Queen. Believe in your opponent. Believe in yourself. Believe in your inspiration, and your opponent's. Make it matter to everyone.

Constance: And remember that you belong to the Queen.

The Three Musketeers, 1966 (Brett and Blessed)

Aramis: What we need is a great cause.

The Three Musketeers, 2011 (Lerman, Macfadyen and Stevenson)

Don't just pretend to be the hero; *be* the hero. Believe in yourself at your best, so others can believe in you at your best.

Alan Swann: Those are movies, damn you! Look at me! I'm flesh and blood, life-size, no larger! I'm not that silly God-damned hero! I never was!

Benjy Stone: To *me* you were! Whoever you were in those movies, those silly goddamn heroes meant a lot to *me*! What does it matter if it was an illusion? It worked! So don't tell me this is you life-size. I can't use you life-size. I need Alan Swanns as big as I can get them! And let me tell you something: you couldn't have convinced me the way you did unless somewhere in you, you *had* that courage! Nobody's that good an actor! You *are* that silly goddamn hero!

My Favorite Year, 1982 (O'Toole)

So what if you're just one fighter, still learning to fight? Take on the world anyway.

Milady: (to Richelieu) I have no doubt that you, who are the equal of catastrophes and kings, will someday be the equal of this man who is not yet a musketeer.

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Turner and Kelly)

Captain Harrison Love: After all, it's only one man...

Don Rafael: It isn't just one man, damn it. It's ZORRO.

The Mask of Zorro, 1998 (Banderas, Hopkins and Zeta-Jones)

Alatriste: You trust a lot in only one sword.

Guadalmedina: You are more than only one sword.

Captain Alatriste, 2013 (Various)

Also, anything you say, say loud enough for the spectators. Make it clear to them what happened, including who won the fight. (An exchange of salutes does not show this to anybody except the two people who felt the blow.)

Tuffy: Touché, Pussycat!

"Touché, Pussycat", 1954 (Barbera and Hanna)

One easy way to help the audience follow the action is to compliment your opponent. He just asked you to yield, but a little too quietly? Respond with a loud, "Your offer shows gallantry. But nay, I cannot yet yield, and lose my chance to fight so valiant a lord," so that the world knows what you both said, even if they only heard you. [It's worth remembering that if you speak to each other quietly, half the audience will assume somebody isn't calling blows.]

Richelieu: I appreciate a note of drama as well as the next man, but an explanation might help clarify things.

The Musketeers, 2014 (Various)

Porthos: You, boy, are arrogant, hot tempered and entirely too bold. I like that. Reminds me of me.

The Three Musketeers, 1993 (Sheen, Sutherland and O'Donnell)

Go watch the Three Stooges again (Howard, Fine and Howard). If you watch carefully, you'll see that they never actually stick a finger in anyone's eyes; it's always above the eyes. But we all believed it, because the recipient reacts so strongly. The lesson here is that the audience cannot tell what's going on without visual cues. Let them know you've been hit.

Laertes. A touch, a touch; I do confess't.

The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, (Shakespeare)

Remember that you will be measured against your opponent, so always compliment him; never insult him. If you make him seem small, you lessen the glory of your eventual victory, or increase the embarrassment of your eventual loss. By contrast, if you build him up, then your victory is greater or your defeat less humbling. I like some version of, "My lords and ladies, I urge you to come and watch the artistry and skill of my opponent Jussac. His bladework is keen; his footwork precise. You don't want to miss the chance to see such exquisite swordsmanship, which you will never see again – not after he crosses blades with me."

D'Artagnan: Well, if I am to be killed, at least it will be by a Musketeer.

The Three Musketeers, 1973 (Reed, Chamberlain and York)

Yes, your goal is to defeat him. But even when you defeat him, you should try to leave him some dignity and self-respect.

Treville: Send him back a corpse, all right. But don't send him back with his trousers dripping.

The Three Musketeers, 1948 (Sidney)

Your job is not just to win, but also to make the fight interesting and exciting. The primary goal is to portray an honorable, dashing warrior. But there's more available than that. Be funny, be silly, be foolish, be whatever you can do well.

Don Diego: If you cannot clothe yourself in the skin of a lion, put on that of a fox.

Zorro, 1957 (Williams, Sheldon and Calvin)

Fred Kwan: Maybe you're the plucky comic relief. Did you ever think of that?

Galaxy Quest, 1999 (Allen, Weaver and Rickman)

We're rascals, scoundrels, villains, and knaves,

Drink up, me 'earties, yo ho.

We're devils and black sheep, really bad eggs,

Drink up, me 'earties, yo ho.

"Yo Ho (A Pirate's Life for Me)", *Pirates of the Caribbean*, Disneyland, 1967 (Pirate chorus)

Laugh. Enjoy it. In the swashbucklers of the 40s and 50s, the good guys are usually laughing all the way through the fight, even when their lives are at risk. [In *At Sword's Point* (Wilde, O'Hara and Douglas), Porthos (Alan Hale Jr.) stops to laugh during a jail break, and gets clobbered from behind. This is *not* the lesson.] And be the hero.

Daffy Duck: You ain't got a chance. I'm the hero of this picture, and you know what happens to the villain.

The Scarlet Pumpernickel, 1949 (Blanc, *The Scarlet Pumpernickel*)

It's worth noting that in *At Sword's Point* (Allen), Porthos is played by Alan Hale, Jr., whom we all know as the Skipper from *Gilligan's Island*. He jumps down off a coach to engage the enemy, and later fights about six enemies alone, reasonably competently. And the lesson for SCA fencers is that it doesn't matter who you are in modern dress. When you put on a doublet and pick up a rapier, you can be the great swashbuckling hero.

Like any performance, all of this requires an emotional commitment to the role you're playing in the fight, in the kingdom, and in your persona. Don't let that emotion carry over to the fighting. That has to be you at your analytical best.

Pedigore: The head. Fight with the head, forget the heart.
Scaramouche, 1952 (Sidney, *Scaramouche*)

Of course, any costume epic shows us how much more impressive you can be if you make stylistic choices that fit within your persona – even during the action.

Porthos: Champagne?
Athos: We're in the middle of a chase, Porthos.
Porthos: You're right - something red.
The Three Musketeers, 1993 (Herek)

Finally, you are in a real fight, or at least a real competition. It's not a movie. Have fun, and I hope the above can make the SCA rapier field more fun and fulfilling for you, and more exciting for the audience. But none of this replaces improving your parries.

King Phillip III: We consider Don Lorca the greatest living fencer in Spain.
Don Juan: That's certainly the mark of a good duelist, Your Majesty - to be living.
The Adventures of Don Juan, 1948 (Flynn, Lindfors and Hale, *The Adventures of Don Juan*)

Blackbeard: If I don't kill a man every now and then, they forget who I am.
Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides, 2011 (Marshall, *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*)

So fight your best, talk your best, and have fun with it. It's more challenging than merely fighting, but it also has a greater payoff.

Porthos: Come on! There is greater adventure beyond.
The Iron Mask, 1929 (Dwan, *The Iron Mask*)

Edna Mode: Go – confront the problem. Fight! Win!
The Incredibles, 2004 (Bird)

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Songs

- Pirate chorus. "Yo Ho (A Pirates Life for Me)." cond. unknown. By George Bruns and Xavier Atencio. 1967.
- Schwartz, Arthur and Howard Dietz. "That's Entertainment." 1952..

Comments

- Adelaide de Beaumont. Facebook comment. 2012.
- Bosco Scelesti. Private communication. 2012
- Cedric Fiðelere. Facebook comment. 2017.
- Iago Cabrera de Cadiz. Facebook comment. October 15, 2012.
- Marie de Girau. Facebook comment. 2013.
- Rich Burlew. *Giant in the Playground; The Order of the Stick* #392. n.d.
- Serena Lascelles. "Private Conversation." 2012.
- Thorland O'Shea. Facebook comment. October 2012.

Films

- At Sword's Point*. Dir. Lewis Allen. Perf. Cornell Wilde, Maureen O'Hara and Robert Douglas. 1952.
- Barbie and the Three Musketeers*. Dir. William Lau. Perf. Kelly Sheridan and Tim Curry. 2009.
- Blood and Sand*. Dir. Rouben Mamoulian. Perf. Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell and Rita Hayworth. 1941.
- Captain Alatriste*. Dir. Various. Perf. Aitor Luna, Natasha Yarovenko. 2013
- Captain Blood*. Dir. Micael Curtiz. Perf. Errol Flynn, Olivia de Haviland and Basil Rathbone. 1935.
- Captain from Castile* . Dir. Henry King. Perf. Tyrone Power, Jean Peters and Cesar Romero. 1947.
- Casanova's Big Night*. Dir Norman McLeod. Perf. Bob Hope, Joan Fontaine. 1954.
- Cutthroat Island*. Dir. Renny Harlin. Perf. Geena Davis and Matthew Modine. 1995.
- Cyrano de Bergerac*. Dir. Michael Gordon. Perf. Jose Ferrer, Mala Powers and William Prince. 1950.
- Cyrano de Bergerac*. Dir. Jean-Paul Rappeneau. Perf. Gérard Depardieu, Anne Brochet and Vincent Perez. 1990.
- Don Q, Son of Zorro*. Dir. Donald Crisp. Perf. Douglas Fairbanks, Mary Astor and Donald Crisp. 1925.
- Fast and Furry-ous, et al.* Dir. Chuck Jones. 1949 - 1965. cartoon series.
- Fire Over England*. Dir. William K. Howard. Perf. Flora Robson and Laurence Olivier. 1937.
- Fortunes of Captain Blood*. Dir. Gordon Douglas. Perf. Louis Hayward. 1950.
- Galaxy Quest*. Dir. Dean Parisot. Perf. Tim Allen, Sigourney Weaver and Alan Rickman. 1999.
- Game of Thrones*. Dir. Various. Perf. Lena Headey, Peter Dinklage and Maisie Williams. 2011-2013.
- Hook*. Dir. Steven Spielberg. Perf. Robin Williams and Dustin Hoffman. 1991.
- Jurassic Park*. Dir. Stephen Spielberg. Perf. Sam Neill, Laura Dern and Jeff Goldblum. 1993.
- La fille de d'Artagnan*. Dir. Bertrand Tavernier. Perf. Sophie Marceaux and Phillipe Noiret. 1994.
- Lady in the Iron Mask*. Dir. Ralph Murphy. Perf. Louis Hayward. 1952.
- Le duel d'Hamlet*. Dir. Clément Maurice. Perf. Sarah Bernhardt. 1900.
- Long John Silver*. Dir. Byron Haskin. Perf. Robert Newton. 1954.
- My Favorite Year*. Dir. Richard Benjamin. Perf. Peter O'Toole. 1982.
- Peter Pan*. Dir. P. J. Hogan. Perf. Jeremy Sumter, Rachel Hurd-Wood and Jason Isaacs. 2003.

- Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Perf. Johnny Depp, Keira Knightley and Orlando Bloom. 2007.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Curse of the Black Pearl*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Perf. Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom and Keira Knightley. 2003.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*. Dir. Gore Verbinski. Perf. Johnny Depp, Orlando Bloom and Keira Knightley. 2006.
- Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*. Dir. Robert Marshall. Perf. Johnny Depp and Penelope Cruz. 2011.
- Quick Draw McGraw - El Kabong*. Dirs. Bill Hanna and Joe Barbera. Perf. Dawes Butler. 1959. Television episode.
- Reclaiming the Blade*. Dir. Daniel McNicoll. Perf. John Rhys Davies and Viggo Mortenson. 2009.
- Red Sonja*. Dir. Richard Fleischer. Perf. Brigitte Nielsen and Arnold Schwarzenegger. 1985.
- Robin and the Seven Hoods*. Dir. Gordon Douglas. Perf. Frank Sinatra, Dean Martin and Sammy Davis Jr. 1964.
- Robin Hood Daffy*. Dir. Chuck Jones. Perf. Mel Blanc. 1958. Animated short.
- Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. George Cukor. Perf. Norma Shearer, Leslie Howard and John Barrymore. 1936.
- Romeo and Juliet*. Dir. Franco Zeffirelli. Perf. Leonard Whiting and Olivia Hussey. 1968.
- Royal Wedding*. Dir. Stanley Donen. Perf. Fred Astaire, Jane Powell and Peter Lawford. 1951.
- Scaramouche*. Dir. George Sidney. Perf. Stewart Granger, Janet Leigh and Eleanor Parker. 1952.
- Soup to Nuts, et al*. Dir. Various. Perf. Moe Howard, et al. 1930-1969.
- Spartacus*. Dir. Stanley Kubrick. Perf. Kirk Douglas, Laurence Olivier and Jean Simmons. 1960.
- Star Wars Episode II - Attack of the Clones*. Dir. George Lucas. Perf. Hayden Christensen, Natalie Portman and Ewan MacGregor. 2002.
- Support Your Local Sheriff*. Dir. Burt Kennedy. Perf. James Garner and Joan Hackett. 1969.
- Swordsman of Sienna*. Dirs. Baccio Bandini and Etienne Périer. Perf. Stewart Granger and Sylvia Koscina. 1962.
- The Adventures of Don Juan*. Dir. Vincent Sherman. Perf. Errol Flynn, Viveca Lindfors and Alan Hale. 1948.
- The Adventures of Long John Silver*. Dir. Lee Sholem, Byron Haskin. Perf. Robert Newton, Connie Gilchrist. 1955-1956.
- The Castilian*. Dir. Javier Setó. Perf. Espartaco Santoni, Frankie Avalon, DCesar Romero. 1963.
- The Court Jester*. Dirs. Melvin Frank and Norman Panama. Perf. Danny Kaye, Glynis Johns and Basil Rathbone. 1955.
- The Deluge*. Dir. Jerzy Hoffman. Perf. Daniel Olbrychski, Malgorzata Braunek and Tadeusz Lomnicki. 1974.

The Dueling Cavalier. Dir. Roscoe Dexter. Perf. Don Lockwood and Lina Lamont. 1929. Lost film. The only remaining scenes can be found in the 1955 documentary on the making of this film.

The Fifth Musketeer. Dir. Ken Annakin. Perf. Beau Bridges, Sylvia Kristel, and Ursula Andress. 1979.

The Four Musketeers. Dir. Richard Lester. Perf. Michael York, Raquel Welch and Oliver Reed. 1974.

The Great Race. Dir. Blake Edwards. Perf. Tony Curtis, Natalie Wood and Jack Lemmon. 1965.

The Incredibles. Dir. Brad Bird. 2004.

The Iron Mask. Dir. Allan Dwan. Perf. Douglas Fairbanks. 1929

The Karate Kid. Dir. John G. Avildsen. Perf. Ralph Macchio and Pat Morita. 1984.

The Lady Musketeer. Dir. Steve Boyum. Perf. Susie Amy, Michael York and Gérard Depardieu. 2004.

The Man in the Iron Mask. Dir. Mike Newell. Perf. Richard Chamberlain, Patrick McGeehan and Louis Jourdan. 1977.

The Man in the Iron Mask. Dir. Randall Wallace. Perf. Leonardo DiCaprio, Jeremy Irons and John Malkovich. 1998.

The Man in the Iron Mask. Dir. James Whake. Perf. Louis Hayward. 1939.

The Man Who Shot Liberty Valance. Dir. John Ford. Perf. James Stewart, John Wayne and Vera Miles. 1962.

The Mark of Zorro. Dir. Rouben Marmoulian. Perf. Tyrone Power, Linda Darnell and Basil Rathbone. 1940.

The Mark of Zorro. Dir. Fred Niblo. Perf. Douglas Fairbanks and Marguerite de la Motte. 1920.

The Mask of Zorro. Dir. Martin Campbell. Perf. Antonio Banderas, Anthony Hopkins and Catherine Zeta-Jones. 1998.

The Musketeer. Dir. Peter Hyams. Perf. Justin Chambers and Tim Roth. 2001.

The Musketeers Dir. various. Perf. Peter Capaldi, Luke Pasqualino. 2014.

The Princess Bride. Dir. Rob Reiner. Perf. Cary Elwes, Mandy Patinkin and Robin Wright. 1987.

The Prisoner of Zenda. Dir. Richard Thorpe. Perf. Stewart Granger and Deborah Kerr. 1952.

The Return of Monte Cristo. Dir. Henry Levin. Perf. Louis Hayward. 1946.

The Scarlet Pumpernickel. Dir. Chuck Jone. Perf. Mel Blanc. 1949.

The Sea Hawk. Dir. Michael Curtiz. Perf. Errol Flynn and Brenda Marshall. 1940 .

The Son of Monte Cristo. Dir. Rowland V. Lee. Perf. Louis Hayward. 1940.

- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. Paul W. S. Anderson. Perf. Logan Lerman, Matthew Macfadyen and Ray Stevenson. 2011.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dirs. Colbert Clark and Armand Schaefer. Perf. John Wayne. 1933.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. Allan Dwan. Perf. Don Ameche and The Ritz Brothers. 1939.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. Peter Hammond. Perf. Jeremy Brett and Brian Blessed. 1966.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. Stephen Herek. Perf. Charlie Sheen, Kiefer Sutherland and Chris O'Donnell. 1993.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. Richard Lester. Perf. Oliver Reed, Richard Chamberlain and Michael York. 1973.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. Fred Niblo. Perf. Douglas Fairbanks. 1921.
- The Three Musketeers*. Dir. George Sidney. Perf. Lana Turner and Gene Kelly. 1948.
- Touché, Pussycat*. Dirs. Joseph Barbera and William Hanna. 1954.
- Treasure Island*. Dir. Haskin, Byron. Perf. Bobby Driscoll, Robert Newton. 1950
- Zorro*. Dirs. Hollingsworth Morse, Charles Barton and Norman Foster. Perf. Guy Williams, Gene Sheldon and Henry Calvin. 1957. Television Series.
- Zorro, the Gay Blade*. Dir. Peter Medak. Perf. George Hamilton and Lauren Hutton. 1981.
- Zorro's Fighting Legion*. Dir. John English and William Witney. Perf. Reed Hadley and Sheila Darcy. 1939.
- Три мускетера*. Dir. Sergey Zhigunov. Perf. Rinal Mukhametov, Yuriy Chursin and Aleksey Makarov. 2013.