

In The Footlight

With: T. Fulton Burns

If you are interested in being featured or would like to nominate another member, please contact Layout Editor, Katie Mueller - Perchance2dream6@aol.com



SAFD: Could you please describe your most rewarding involvement with staged violence?

TFB: This is honestly a tough question. There is one particular experience though that I'll not soon forget. It was the summer I interned in Las Vegas and Brian Byrnes challenged my single sword scene. He knew that I had settled into one way of performing the role and he

presented several different approaches. I rejected his ideas at first because I just wanted to pass the test and get that weapon on my list (what would eventually be all eight.) Luckily for me, I eventually saw the benefit of what he offered. The rewarding involvement was two fold: it was one of my favorite performances of any role I have ever done and I received my very first Examiner's Award for Excellence. Because of Brian's constant challenges I honestly feel a great sense of pride in my work and I now try to incorporate Brian's ideas as I teach acting.

SAFD: Have you found any particular style of movement training to be more beneficial to those involved in stage violence (ex. a particular martial arts, etc.)?

TFB: I am trained as a dancer so that form of movement always influences me in every aspect of what we do. For processing fights it is the training I had in aikido but I honestly think any form of martial arts is helpful to understanding our work. Also, I can't help but think that any form of movement training would be beneficial in stage violence.

SAFD: When working on a scene, what elements do you consider paramount in a partner?

TFB: Respect is the element that I consider paramount in a partner and this includes the respect of time spent, artistic ideas, and most importantly the respect for safety.

SAFD: Why did you become a member of the SAFD?

TFB: I was afraid that if I didn't become a member Mike Chin would hurt me and I wouldn't make it home from Las Vegas alive! I know it is cliché but I honestly believe in the importance of the SAFD, so I joined in 2000 with many of my workshop classmates. I stay with the SAFD because of what it strives to offer in the world of theatre and stage combat. One of its goals is to improve the world of theatre and that is why I think what the SAFD does matters.

SAFD: What do you love about the SAFD?

TFB: My friends! I tell my students how important it is to make strong connections in the world of theatre. The

SAFD has provided me with many great connections both personal and professional, and I keep in touch with them constantly.

SAFD: Where do you see yourself within the Society in five years?

TFB: I have applied for the TCW in 2010 with the hope of becoming a Certified Teacher with the SAFD. This has been a goal of mine for quite some time and even it played a part when I was considering my graduate school options. Another goal I have in my SAFD membership is that I intend to write a book showcasing important issues regarding acting and how these issues relate to our stage combat work specifically. I want to be able to give back to the organization that I feel has given so much to me.

SAFD: What is your favorite film involving violence? Why?

TFB: *The Prisoner of Zenda* tops my list! I love the art of acting and clear objectives performed by the actors for their audience. The final fight scene between Rupert and Rassendyll is one that I feel should be used for teaching stage combat at any university. The clear objectives, tactics, and obstacles between the two characters is such a breath of fresh air compared to most final face offs. How they use the choreography to relay their goals is exciting and I just love it!

SAFD: If the SAFD were to add another weapon form, what should it be and why?

TFB: I would like to see skills tests that are geared towards mixed weapons. This idea would mean that the performers would not only have to understand the moves and psychology of the weapon they are wielding but also the weapons held by their opponent. With mixed weapons we would increase the understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of those weapons we are holding and their relation to these weapons to which we are matched. The greater understanding of the weapons would also benefit the instructor's teaching and the preparation of the skills tests. I believe that the opportunity for all of us to grow in this field is important and a mixed weapons-SPT could contribute to this growth.

SAFD: What is in your pockets right now?

TFB: Among the standard loose change and wallet, I have in my pocket a fortune from a cookie which reads "Remember three months from this date. Good things are in store for you." It always stays in my wallet even though I don't recall when I got that fortune, so either that date has passed or it is still on its way. Personally, I like to think that I haven't reached that date yet and that good things are always in store for me.