The School Of The Sword

Two's Company – Part IV
The Play's the Thing

An introduction to the play of two swords, one in each hand, according to the work of Achille Marozzo

Presented by Phil Marshall and Oliver Barker , The School of the Sword
At the Royal Armoury – Leeds 21/02/09

The Play's the Thing - An introduction to the play of two swords
(Being Two's Company Part IV)

And also some thoughts on drills based on the set plays
(Originally published as "The Good, The Bad and The Other One")

Part I: Context

In this article I want to examine Marozzo's play for two swords, one in each hand. In particular, as the use of two swords is sometimes perceived as a difficult style to learn, I want to focus on practical training with two swords, including different perspectives on the set play as a source of drills. Although Marozzo is the primary text for this work, the actions and principles for using two swords are discussed in several treatises and I will refer to Manciolino, DiGrassi, Agrippa and Sutor amongst others.

I know that, in the past, the use of two swords has not always received balanced publicity. Therefore, while I do not want to revisit old arguments, I think it is worth noting the starting points from which I am working.

Firstly, it does not matter whether the two swords used are a "case", that is two half-hilted swords that will fit into the same scabbard, or simply a pair of swords. While having a true case may make it easier to carry two swords and therefore use this style, the history of wearing two swords is not part of this discussion. Our preferred swords for this work are any that could be described as a sidesword, with a simple knuckle bow and one or two side rings, and a 38" blade (approx). That said, one of the few extant cases I have seen has a swept hilt, including a shell inside the front port and a 46" blade.

Secondly, while the use of two swords may be harder than using other companion weapons, it is not *significantly* harder to learn. I think the confusion about the difficulty of using two swords comes from DiGrassi's opening comments on the subject: "To him that would handle these weapons, it is necessary that he can as well manage the left hand as the right … he is to resolve himself, that he can do no good, without that kind of nimbleness and dexterity." It is true that it will take time to develop the muscles in your left arm so that you can use your second sword to its full potential. (And DiGrassi is right that you should not use this style in earnest if you are not well practiced, although, that could be said of *any* companion weapon.) However, I do not think you need to spend years learning to use single sword in your left hand as well as you can with your right before you start to learn two swords. Indeed, the easiest way to build strength and dexterity in the left hand is to practise with both swords. You will have *most* flexibility when you can use both swords equally well, however, until that time, the second sword can be a very effective companion weapon.

A good analogy to the use of two swords might be unarmed combat. You have two hands that can both perform the same actions. However, you do not use your hands independently. Rather, each action uses your whole body, and the movement of one hand supports the movement of the other. Also, while the hands are supposed to be used equally, many people have, or start with, a favoured hand. In the same way, your two swords should not be used independently. Both weapons have a role to play in every action. Initially, one sword can be used to support the other, until you are comfortable with the actions of both.

Part II: Principles

The tempi, measures and tactics with two swords are very similar to those of single sword or sword and dagger. (Sutor states directly that you should apply what you have learnt in single sword and Fabris notes that, once you have mastered single sword and sword and dagger you can fight with any weapon in your left hand "whether you hold it in your hand or strap it to your arm".) However, you must not only learn to use your second sword effectively, but also to avoid that of your opponent.

It is therefore worth noting that the safest place to be outside your opponent in a position where you can engage the sword that is closest to you (usually their front sword), strike them with your second sword and not be hit by their rear sword, which is obscured by their body/weapon. See photo below. During the play, you will have to adjust your footwork so that you step away from their "free" weapon and into a position of safety. Where this is will depend upon how you opponent attacks.

The basic actions of two swords include:
- Twin strike – possible, but not recommended, as it can leave you open to a counter attack.
- Twin defence – parrying with both weapons at once. The parry "tutta coperta" – totally covered – is seen in both Fabris and Alfieri with sword and dagger and sword and cloak. It can be a very strong parry, and Marozzo uses a defence with crossed sword on almost every action as he retreats. Fabris makes a key point when discussing the use of two weapons which is that it is better to parry with both weapons through choice, rather than try to parry with one, find you are too weak and have to move the second weapon through obedience.
- Successive strikes – quite useful and advocated by DiGrassi, as it is quicker to go forwards than to go backwards
- Parry with one sword and then counter with the other (two tempi)
- Single tempo parry with one sword and simultaneously counter with the other – favoured in Marozzo

In each case, the second sword is used to support the actions of the stronger weapon by covering a secondary line of attack, parrying or supporting a parry or executing (or threatening) a counter attack.

One of the perceived worries of using two swords is getting your weapons tangled. A key way to avoid this is to always start and finish in a good guard. In particular, if your weapons are covering different lines, then there is less chance that their paths will cross.

Several examples of this can be seen in the play. In each case, the swords are in the following configuration:
- One forwards – one back
- One "high" one "low"
- One centre, one wide

The front sword is mainly used for the first defence/feints, before you then pass through and counter with rear sword. The rear sword is often used to cover secondary lines of attack and/or present a constant threat of counter attack. Whether you have your stronger sword (if you have one) forwards as the first line of defence, or keep your stronger sword back ready for the counter attack is a matter of personal choice.

Part III: The Play of two swords

The play, from my point of view, is designed to be an aid to training, not an end in itself. Before discussing the techniques seen in Marozzo's play of two swords, here are a few comments on how the play is presented in the treatise and in these notes.

In the treatise the play is split into separate chapters, each of which represents a different situation that you may face during a fight. The actions within each chapter form a logical sequence which illustrates the application of the principles of two swords, based on your starting guard and the actions of your opponent.

I will refer to a sequence of actions which start from guard on the edge of measure, begin with an opening movement (feint, invitation, attack etc.) and end with you have withdrawn to guard out of measure as an *encounter*. Thus an encounter forms a set of techniques that could stand alone and be applied in a fight.

Usually, one chapter describes one encounter, although some chapters cover more than one encounter in sequence, while others describe different possible encounters from the same starting positions. In each case your actions are described with reference to the actions of your opponent: "If your opponent does this…" and then later on "And if your opponent does this…" Therefore, when performing the play, you will need to adapt your actions to the situation and not merely walk through them in order like a script.

Indeed, if you simply step through the actions in turn, it can be very hard to find the right tempo to strike and therefore very difficult to make the techniques works. The play is actually easier to perform if you allow the movements to flow naturally, even varying the order of the encounters if the positions are not correct for the next action listed. Where

you (or your opponent) have a choice of action, it is up to the other person to respond appropriately. If there are several variations of an encounter, you could play out each one before moving on to the next chapter, so that you practise the full variety of techniques, or just perform one as you see fit.

Suggestions on different ways to work through the play are given later, from slow, formal work looking at the mechanics of each action to fairly free drills to work the techniques under pressure. The key is to decide with your training partner what you want to gain from the play and agree how you will perform the actions to meet that goal.

Every encounter can be though of as a mini fight, which has a "winner" and a "loser". The winner is the one who performs the technique being taught correctly, parrying the opponent's blow and countering or taking advantage of a mistake by the opponent.

In most fencing treatises, these roles have set names or means of identification. In Marozzo, "you" win, "your enemy" loses; In Thibault, the winner is Alexander, who always beats Zachary; In Fabris, "our fencer" defeats "his enemy"; In Alfieri, the fighters are simple referred to by number. In the descriptions that follow, I will actually use Alfieri's convention, gentleman I (GI) and gentleman II (GII). Of course, gentleman I won!

The role of the gentleman II is very important in allowing the other person to practise, in that he must provide the correct openings or deliver the correct blows to allow gentleman I to work through the listed techniques. However, in order to get the most out of the play, gentleman II also must provide enough challenge that his partner has to perform the techniques correctly, without taking advantage of the fact the he knows what is coming to defend himself. Each encounter must be real enough that there is a clear reason why gentleman I gains the advantage and wins having worked for the blow, not just that gentleman II is being a helpful target and letting himself be hit.

The challenge with Marozzo's play is that the role of gentleman I is usually well defined, as he does the actual techniques being taught. However, gentleman II's actions are less clear. The key attacks are given, but not what to do when gentleman I attacks back. (Although it is clear that there is a threat of a counter attack from gentleman II, as you always "cross your swords for your defence" as you recover to guard.

Therefore, we do not just need to examine the actions of gentleman I, but also decide how we can create a realistic set of actions for gentleman II, that keep the flow of the play but ultimately lead to gentleman I winning. This is discussed in the final part of this article.

For ease, the actions of the play are summarised in a table, given below.
The play is controlled at each stage by the agent, marked "A" in the table. The agent makes the opening attack/feint/engagement etc. It is up to the patient to respond.
It is the agent's responsibility to wait for the patient to be ready and to choose an attack that is appropriate to the patient's guard.

Tempo is shown by the cells in the table – actions in one cell happen simultaneously. Actions in overlapping cells for gentleman I and gentleman II also happen together. Where one action causes another, the causation is shown by an arrow "→".

Example 1:

3. A. (a) Gain sword on the inside	→	Cavazione and thrust under sword arm
Parry with sword then control with dagger under R arm while passing the LF forwards and thrusting in seconda or cutting roverso to the R arm OR	←	

In this action, the gentleman I is agent and starts by gaining gentleman II's sword. This causes (→) gentleman II to cavazione and thrust. This tempo starts as gentleman I finds the sword (overlapping cells). The thrust causes a second action (and therefore a new tempo) from gentleman I, which happens during gentleman II's thrust.

Example 2:

Withdraw to g. mista		{Counter} Withdraw to terza over the left foot

The encounter ends with both gentlemen withdrawing to guard. In this case, this is a new tempo for each gentleman and happens simultaneously.

The grey cells and double line indicate the end of one chapter/encounter in the treatise.

The curly braces indicate an optional action for gentleman II, in this case a possible counter attack. No guidance is given in the treatise on what to do – that is left to gentleman II. However, filling in these optional actions is what can move the play from a fairly slow, formal exercise to an intense drill. Suggestions on how to do this in a consistent manner form the final part of this article.

NOTE: The agent can "push" the patient by attacking or acting as soon as he likes, rather than giving the patient time to settle. This will depend upon the skill and experience of the practitioners and should be built in gradually with new students.
Other abbreviations in the table are L/R for left and right; LS = left sword, LF = left foot and similarly for RS, RF.

Marozzo's Play of Two Swords, One in Each Hand

Gentleman I		Gentleman II
The advance		
Draw into RF forwards RS becca cessa and LS coda lunga et alta, then turn RS into guardia alta and LS point down (matching the position formed at the end of the play)		
Pass forward 3 steps, ending LF RS coda lunga et alta and LS porta di ferro		
The play		
1. (A) Place LS under enemy's front sword, cut falso to LH with RS	→	{Parry or respond as required} Thrust ponta or stocatta to face
Parry falso with LS {either a falso rising cut, or controlling the enemy's sword with the false edge like a parry sixte}, pass RF forwards and thrust to breast	←	
Recover RF behind LF, crossing swords and then returning to first guard		{Counter}
2. (P) Give opening to L leg	→	Cut mandritto to leg {could be roverso, in which case go to (3)}
Parry LS guardia di fianco (false edge, hand up, point down) pass RF forwards and strike mandritto to head or leg or thrust a ponta	←	
Recover RF behind LF, crossing swords and then returning to first guard		{Counter}
3. (P) Pass RF across to his left side, parry with the true edge of LS (hand up, point down – as in a hanging guardia di testa/prima etc.), strike roverso sgualembrato to head	←	Cut roverso high or low N.B. Roverso with LS to opening on L {For variety, can cut roverso with RS, in which case GI must pass to GII's right}
Recover RF behind LF, crossing swords and then returning to first guard		{Counter}
4. (A) Cut falso to enemy's hand with RS and give an opening above {either side}	→	Cut roverso or thrust ponta or stocatta {The next action follows more smoothly if GII voids the cut to the leg}
Step forwards with the RF, cross swords to parry (RS below) and cut roverso to front leg, ending RS coda lunga e stretta and LS coda lunga et alta	←	
Step LF to his right, parrying with the true edge of the LS and cutting mandritto to the head.	←	Cut to head
Pass left foot behind right, cutting mandritto with LS, ending in LS cinghiara porta di ferro and RS coda lunga et stretta		{Counter}

5. A. Cut falso with LS to enemy's RH, pass forwards with the LF and cut mandritto to the leg with RS. End RS in cinghiara porta di ferro and LS in coda lunga et stretta.	←	In porta di ferro alta and coda lunga et stretta, or swords crossed
(a) Pass RF forwards, parry by crossing swords and give roverso to the leg with RS	←	Cut to head or leg
(b) Thrust with LS between the weapons	←	OR NOTHING
	→	Parry
Pass RF forwards and cut mandritto with RS to arm or leg	←	
Cross swords and cut roverso to the leg (DO NOT MOVE FEET)		{Counter}
Pass back RF, crossing swords and ending in LS porta di ferro alta and RS in coda lunga et alta		{Counter} Match guard
6. A. Cut roverso to LS, pass RF to left and thrust (to flank) or cut mandritto to the leg		{Counter}
Pass back RF, crossing swords and ending in LS porta di ferro alta and RS in coda lunga et alta		{Counter}
7. Engage his LS (false edge) with your LS (true edge); pass RF forwards and to L side, thrust "falso impuntato" with LS to temple and cut mandritto with RS to L leg; end RS porta di ferro larga and LS guardia di testa		{Counter}
Step RF slightly to his R, parry/engage falso with RS, then roverso with RS	←	Attack high/low, or do nothing
Pass LF forwards also to RS, cut falso then mandritto		
Pass LF behind right, ending with RS in coda lunga et stretta and LS in coda lunga et alta		{Counter}
8. A. Cut falso with LS to his hand, giving an opening	→	Any blow
Parry with true edge of RS, turning the hand upwards and the point towards the ground; Pass the LF forwards (and to the R), thrust ponta to the chest with LS	←	
Pass LF behind RF, cutting fendente tramazzone with RS (flows from point-down parry); end RF RS porta di ferro larga and LS coda lunga et alta		{Counter}
Half turn of hands into LS cinghiara porta di ferro and RS coda lunga et stretta		

The embellishment
Pass RF behind L, making falso then roverso with LS and falso the mandritto with the RS; end RS in cinghiara porta di ferro and LS in coda lunga et stretta
Pass LF back (gran passo) making falso then roverso with RS
Draw LF up close to RF, making falso-dritto with RS into guardia alta and turning point of LS to ground
Return to the play

Expansion of the actions and a few thoughts:

The advance
The draw into guard is our signal within the School that we are ready to fight. No one moves before both players have drawn their swords, and once you have drawn you sword you begin immediately.
Turning the hands into the same position in which you finish adds an extra moment to settle yourself and also gives an aesthetic symmetry to the play.
You should aim to start from far enough away that you reach the correct measure for the first encounter at the end of your three steps.

Starting position (not at full distance) with RS in guardia alta and LS in coda lunga e larga.

1.

In the first action the LS is placed below GII's LS to give an invitation to GII and to set up the false edge parry. GII is further enticed in by throwing a cut at his LH and, if he does not move, you can just hit him!
The false edge parry does not need much power, as it is aided by the turn of the body, although you can beat it if you wish (as seen in Marozzo's single sword work). It is, however, wise to keep the LS quite low, to keep you covered on that side.
Notice that the step takes you away from his rear (R) sword.
As you recover, you "cross your swords for your defence". This should allow you to cover both the high and low lines, in case your opponent attempts to follow up with his rear sword.

Encounter 1:

The initial guard
LS "forwards and low"
RS "back and high"

Starting measure

Lowering of the LS in preparation for
the falso parry.

Passing forwards and to *his left*,
parrying RS and thrusting to the flank.

Note: most of the steps in the play are relative to your opponent – his right, his left etc.

Withdrawing out of measure under
cover of the crossed swords
(Note: you should do this after *every* encounter, unless otherwise specified.)

2 - 4.

Encounters 2, 3 and 4 all start from the same guard as 1, and so are "interchangeable" if you wish to add some variety to the play, or if GI does not give the correct opening. If GII does not move, GI should cut the GII's LH with his RS and then respond to GII's next action.

Encounter 4 is a different way of dealing with the thrust, but, in this case, GII voids GI's attempted counter and then follows up with a cut to the head. Therefore GI must step again with the left foot, this time to GII's left side, to stay away from the rear sword. (Note: the void is not explicit in the treatise, but, if the first attack hits, GII is less likely to follow up with the cut to the head. Adding the void and making the sequence more natural aids the measure for the second actions.)

It appears to be important to move quite forcibly and quickly, both moving in to and moving out of measure, in order to stay out of the reach of your opponent's second weapon.

Encounters 2 and 3 are different parries against cuts, both from the left and from the right, and both high and low. It is worth practising all variations and looking for where you can step safely. We have found that if you parry low with the left sword the roverso over your left sword to your enemies head is quite effective, whilst the cut to the leg is easier if you are forced to parry high.

NB: a mandritto is always thrown "palm up" from your sword arm side (from your right with your right sword, and from your left with your left sword). A roverso is thrown "palm down". This is clear (I believe) from sections of the text that describes the cuts and their finishing guards.

2. Parrying a mandritto to the leg with the false edge of the LS and cutting mandritto with the RS. Note that the cut covers the lines of your enemy's LS.

Variations on 3:

Parrying a LS roverso to the head and countering mandritto or roverso to the head or leg.

Parrying a RS roverso to the head or leg and stepping away
from the rear sword whilst cutting roverso to the leg or head

Parrying a thrust with LS
and cutting to the leg

Voiding the cut to the leg before…

… countering with a cut to the head.
Note the step away from the rear sword

The same action seen from behind.
In this case I have thrust with the right
sword to cover my enemy's lower weapon.

5.

Encounter 5 needs good timing from GI – If GII does not respond after the first action,
then GI must pursue immediately with 5b. Alternatively, you can go straight into 5b from 4
whilst GII is still recovering.

Here the aim is to draw a parry with a thrust between the weapons, creating an opening on
the outside for a cut.

In the photo below, Oli has moved to parry with his left sword and then been hit in the leg.

6.

In encounter 6 you are agent, beating your opponent's swords away. This can be done in two tempi or as a single tempo with both swords moving together. The roverso across the LS actually closes the line to both of your opponent's weapons.

Encounter 6, performed as Oli is still recovering from the previous action.

7.

Encounter 7 includes a number of "signature" moves. The falso impuntato is used as an opening and then the first true high/low guard combination is seen. (Note that this guard and the subsequent action from the basis of Manciolino's play.)
The false-edge rising/true-edge descending combination occurs in Marozzo's single sword, and here it is redoubled with an additional strike with the second sword. It is a feature of Marozzo's work that if someone is worth hitting once, they are worth hitting three times! The steps are made towards your opponent's right, circling around him into the space.

Engaging the LS prior to the falso

The falso impuntato

The high/low guard, which is the finishing position from the cut. Note that Oli is still recovering from the initial attack.

The falso parry with the RS whilst stepping across with the RF.

The RS roverso, following the falso parry.
Note that the LS is already descending for its cut.

8.

The final encounter is similar to the first, but with the feet and weapons reversed. In this case there is also a cut as you return to guard, which is common in the rest of Marozzo's work, although less prevalent in the play of two swords.

Parrying with the RS and countering with a thrust.

The tramazzone whilst recovering to guard

Finishing positions before the embellishment, RF forwards.

The Embellishment

The embellishment is simply a way of breaking the measure in an orderly fashion and signally that you wish to swap roles. You should end in the same guardia alta as that in which you started and then either stop or return to the beginning of the play as you desire.

Summary of guards

LS: porta di ferro stretta
RS: coda lunga e alta

LS: coda lunga e alta
RS: coda lunga e stretta
(This is similar to DiGrassi's broad ward)

LS: guardi di testa
RS: porta di ferro larga
This is also seen in Manciolino

LS: coda lunga e stretta
RS: becca possa
This is DiGrassi's high ward

Exercises based on the play

Solo

Practise each of the strikes from the play in isolation to a target. In particular, practise the sequence from encounter 7, starting from porta di ferro larga/guardia di testa, as it is really good for building coordination with both weapons.

- € You can build up to this by first cutting with the high sword only whilst you step to the left. As you cut move into the mirror image of your first guard, with the RS in guardia di testa and the LS in porta di ferro larga. Repeat this action, alternating steps and cuts to the left and right.
- € Next build in the false edge cut with the low sword, before stepping and cutting with the high sword.
- € Finally, practise the full action, again alternating sides so that you work both arms.

Practise the role of GI for each encounter in isolation, particularly focusing on the starting and finishing guards

Work through each side of the play in order, first as GI, then as GII

Work through the play in a "random" order, picking any technique that fits the guard where you finish the previous encounter

When practising the play as a solo form, try to imagine your enemy. Feel free to move around naturally, changing the facing etc.

Partnered

Practise each encounter with a partner at half speed so that you can explore the body mechanics

Practise the variations on each encounter, individually in order and then varying your actions to fit the current situation

Practise the tempo for each encounter – the patient can vary their response to the agent's opening

Practise the play as a competitive exercise, with GII really trying to hit GI and not just provide a target. Different ways for GII to challenge GI are explored below.

Part IV: Filling in the gaps in the play

Our key question earlier was "how can we create a realistic set of actions for gentleman II, which keep the flow of the play but ultimately lead to gentleman I winning?" The actions of gentleman II ultimately dictate how the play works and how hard gentleman I trains. However, I do not want to simple write a list of actions for gentleman II, as I need him to adapt to the current situation. His actions should be unplanned, but ultimately flawed. If gentleman II is an instructor, then they can act as they wish to push their student, but I am interested in finding a way of allowing anyone to play the role of gentleman II in an effective manner.

To do this in a slightly different way I am going to borrow an idea from performance combat and examine the motivations of our two fighters. Indeed, I want to think of the play as exactly that – a play with scenes and characters telling a dramatic tale of a vicious fight, leading to one eventual victor.

So let us examine the characters for our play.

Watch any sword-movie and you will notice that the combatants often can be described using just two characteristics: level of skill and desire to fight. You can also often define the "good guys" and the "bad guys".[i] (Conventionally, the good guys will win the fight.)

Our first character is a *Rookie*. He has huge energy and desire to fight, but limited skill. Examples for the good guys might be a young D'Artangnan, a young Obi-Wan, or Luke Skywalker in 'Empire'. Examples for the bad guys might include your average cardinal's guard. Rookies on the bad guys' side might be termed *henchmen*.

Our second character is the opposite of a rookie and he is the *veteran*. The veteran has a high level of skill, gained through years of experience, but he has lost the desire to fight. For the good guys: old Obi-Wan, Athos. For the bad guys… well, none! The bad guys are all dead before they make veteran. (Vader is possibly one of the most 'veteran' bad guys.)

Our final character is the *hero* (or the *villain* for the bad guys). He has skills and is keen to use them. Examples would include mature D'Artangnan, Luke in 'Jedi', Obi-Wan in episode II/III, Batman, Zorro, Darth Maul, Ricardo Montero (Zorro's nemesis), Cpt Rochefort etc.

So let us see how these characters fit into our play.

Gentleman I is almost always a hero. He should be skilled, can be agent or patient, and ultimately, will win the fight. Occasionally, if gentleman I is patient, he can be a veteran, waiting for the right moment to dispatch his young adversary with the perfectly timed blow.

Gentleman II is more interesting, as he can take on any of the roles and even a mix of several. Which role he is playing will determine how he fills in the gaps between the set techniques and what ultimately leads to his downfall.

The most likely role for gentleman II is the henchman – keen to fight, but not as skilled as gentleman I (hence why he loses). He may well be agent, attacking a lot, falling for every invitation or feint and not really parrying the counter attacks.

To try to put this in to context, I will describe Marozzo's first form for sword and buckler using several different combinations of characters. Hopefully you will see how this changes the fight and how it leads to different forms of training from the same few moves. (Note: in this draft I am assuming some familiarity with the form and so I have abbreviated the names of the techniques.)

Fight 1: Master (hero) vs Student (rookie) (Master showing the student the error in certain techniques and how to cover with the buckler)

GI in g. alta, GII in g. alta, both still and elegant
GI cuts m. sq. to buckler, and slips back to g. alta
GII takes the opportunity to launch a r. sq. to GI's head
GI parries with a r. sq. and immediately follows up with a stoc.
GII, having thrown the r. sq. is lying spent – he may try to withdraw his front foot but does not parry. The stoc. should be fast enough that he cannot parry and GI controls GII's weapon with his buckler.
GI advances two steps with tram.
AT THE SAME TIME GII retreats and tries to cut r. which GI parries with buckler.
GII tries to void left and throw another r. at GI's head.
GI parries g. di testa and counters with the traverse/low m. and r. sq.
GII may try to cut r. again, which GI controls with his buckler.
Finish.

The whole form is quite slow, with several pauses to show the technique. GII keeps trying to attack, but does not cover himself correctly. GI covers with the buckler while countering and thus is successful.

Fight 2: Student (hero) vs Master (veteran) (Master forcing the student to riposte quickly and find the openings.)

GI in g. alta, GII in g. alta, both still and elegant
GI cuts m. sq. to buckler, and slips back to g. alta
GII takes the opportunity to launch a r. sq. to GI's head
GI parries with a r. sq. and immediately follows up with a stoc.
GII, having thrown the r. sq. tries to withdraw and parry with buckler.
If stoc. misses, GI pursues two steps with tramazzone.

AT THE SAME TIME GII retreats and tries to parry (true edge or false edge). GI must aim for the openings and use his pace to close down the space.
GII steps left and throws another r. at GI's head.
GI parries g. di testa and counters with the traverse/low m. and r. sq.
GII may try to parry again, which GI avoids.
Finish.

In this version, GII makes GI work for each hit, varying his response to meet the student's level.

Fight 3: (Slightly smug) Hero vs Henchman

Alexander smirked as Zachary, the disposable red-shirted henchman, edged forwards. Our hero shifted his weight and smiled again as Zachary flinched away. He threw a half-hearted cut to Zachary's buckler. Nothing special, just enough to draw him out. Perfect. Zachary responded with an over-committed roverso that Alexander easily parried. He could barely contain his contempt as he casually thrust Zachary through the shoulder. Zachary staggered back, desperately trying to parry the blows that were raining down on him. But, with his sword arm still recovering from the thrust, he could only swat at the cuts with his buckler. Alexander checked his pursuit to parry the wild blow aimed at his head, the last defiant act of a doomed man, and quickly cut Zachary's leg from under him. With a swift step and one final cut, this fight was over. One down, three to go…

Fight 3 uses the same techniques and same basic characters as fight 1, but has a very different feel as gentleman I and gentleman II play out their roles.

The key is that, in the play, there should be no lazy techniques. Every move must have a context and a purpose – you can do a technique that is not 'perfect' if it is done for a valid reason. Gentleman II's role is to push gentleman I to perform the techniques correctly, but he should also take the opportunity to practice as much as possible, thus maximising his use of his own training time. If you can both use the play as an opportunity to train, then it is likely that you will both progress more quickly. And, by training with more pressure and flow, you are more likely to be able to apply the techniques in a bout.

By understanding the characters and roles in the play we can give GII a set of rules or behaviours to follow, rather than trying to list every possible action that GII may need to know. Taking on a character may also help some students think about their movements from a different perspective and therefore improve their ability to respond appropriately. It is also quite fun!

Within the play for two swords, having GII play the role of rookie is very useful as it will force GI to cover with both swords as he retreats out of measure, which is a crucial skill.

Variations on the play, using the characters above:

Basic: work through in order, with the first option for each encounter and no resistance from gentleman II (useful for learning the movements)

Hero vs Veteran:
GII is defensive – never attacking when he has the option to wait, slowing down the tempo in the breaks, attempts to parry all of the hero's strikes, but not counter

Hero vs Rookie:
GII is aggressive – always attacking when he has the option, speeding up the tempo in breaks, always attempts the double kill rather than attempting to parry the hero's strikes

Hero vs Villain: (semi-free play)
Villain may mix and match techniques from the play, parrying and countering as desired

Alternating:
Gentlemen alternate being *agent.* The agent can choose to find the sword and force an attack from the patient, or attack directly. Play continues to a break (one encounter) then the role of agent passes to the other player.

My thanks go to all the members of the School of the Sword who have helped with this research and the production of these notes, particularly Dr Oliver Barker and Caroline Stewart.
If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me on phil@schoolofthesword.com

During the preparation of this workshop, reference was made to the translations and interpretations of William Wilson, Gary Chelak, Jherek Swanger, Giovanni Rapisardi, Tom Leoni and Steven Reich, as well as our own translation of Marozzo.

You advised to always train with an instructor and ensure that you always use adequate protective equipment, including a mask, jacket and gauntlets. These notes are for reference only and The School of the Sword takes no responsibility for students training from these notes away from our direct supervision.

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[i] Thanks to Scott Brown for the initial ideas on how to get the most out of drills by making both gentlemen work and for teaching me the basics of the skill/desire model. Scott originally discussed the skill/desire model with Kyle Rowling at Banff, and I believe Kyle learned it from Andy Fraiser. Some of the names for the characters, and the descriptions of 'good guys' vs 'bad guys' are my own as far as I am aware.