

CONCEPTS OF FENCING WITH ONE AND TWO HANDS IN THE ENGLISH SCHOOL OF THE 18TH CENTURY

English Backsword of the 18th century is a fusion of old and modern methods. These methods are the older backsword school, the rapier school, and the smallsword school. In a general perspective, backsword method applies to various weapons, such as the spadron (that employs smallsword and backsword methods together), the hanger, the sabre and the staff.

The concept of the workshop

The general concept of this workshop is outlining the basics of narrow spaced play and action fulcrum. Narrow spaced play is an idea not dissimilar to the Italian stringere: remaining well defended and seeking the shorter line of action. The fulcrum of the action is the point around which the action revolves.

Basic Backsword

Basic backsword work makes use of the guards of inside, outside, St. George, medium, prime and seconde hanging. The cuts are the 6 cuts or Roworth's diagram, plus the addition of the vertical cut. Thrusts used are a subset of the smallsword's thrusts: carte, tierce, seconde, low carte and sometimes sixte. Guards are held out at arms, parries and cuts are performed with minimum movements, the latter usually from the wrist or elbow.

Basic Counters

The most basic counters, and the most effective, are parries with ripostes inside the opponent's sword, the countercuts on the slip and the timecuts. These techniques share the same concept of the *controcavazione* in rapier play; similar counters will be shown with a short rapier too.

Backsword and dagger

Backsword and dagger differs very little from single backsword, in the 18th century the dagger was held above the brow and both weapons were held in tierce, often crossing. Defense could be performed with the sword or with both weapons together; thrusts can be parried with the dagger (Swetnam).

The Quarterstaff

The quarterstaff is used in a way very similar to the sword, it puts together backsword and rapier or smallsword concepts. Guards used are inside, outside, hanging and medium, cuts are taken from backsword play, thrusts from rapier or smallsword play.

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