

Scottish Dancing

Or Footwork in the Glasgow Ringeck

Longpoint 2019

MS E.1939.65.341, the Glasgow Fechtbuch, contains the only surviving illustrations associated with a copy of Ringeck. Many of these show fencers using what appear to be large crossing steps, quite at odds with some of the conventional wisdom about effective fencing footwork. This class will explore what the artist may have been trying to convey in these pictures, by considering possible interpretations of the plays depicted. Techniques covered will include *twer*, *schiel*, *absetzen* and *zucken*.

Experience: intermediate to advanced, fencers should be familiar with most early L. plays.

Gear: Mask, gloves, gorget and chest protector or jacket.

Plan

Intro - 10 minutes

Summarise what we see

- Appearance of large offline steps
- Of 31 illustrations (62 figures), approximately 15 show this - 1/4 of the fencers in this gloss.

Main interpretive possibilities:

- crossed footwork
- blade actions preceding foot actions
- Something else?

This is a class about working interpretations - it's not a polished block of material. Try it out, think about it, we'll probably have some review discussion after each piece. Feedback very much welcomed.

Footwork warmups - 10 minutes

Hand fencing games

- Linear
 - Maintain distance. Straight attack when coach cues it
- Outside
 - Maintain distance. Fencer cue straight attack, coach go, fencer step out and counter-hit with the left
- Through (lead foot stepping/uncrossed, Travis style)
 - Maintain distance. Fencer cue with left foot out, coach attack, fencer parry and counter-touch
- Cross-step
 - Halfsword play
 - Coach cues. Fencer pass on the right to strike, coach parry with left.
 - Fencer step through with the left for a short hit.

Application 1: schiel (vs langort) 6v - 15 minutes

This is the text and the gloss of yet another play from the squint-hew

61 *Squint to the point
And take the neck without fear.*

Gloss. *Note, the squinter breaks the long-point with a deceit of the visage and conduct it thusly: When he stands against you and holds the point against the face or against the chest from extended arms, so stand with the left foot forward and squint with the visage to his point, and act as if you wish to hew to his point, and hew strongly onto his sword with the short edge, and with that, shoot the point long to his neck with a tread-in of the right foot (as stands pictured hereafter next to this).*

- Demonstrate the play as a direct action
- Demonstrate the cross-step if they stay on the blade
- Demonstrate how it handles durchwechselln

The crossed step is serving two purposes here. If you get a bind, it's controlling their sword strongly (we'll talk about this more in the next section). If you don't get a bind (they disengage), then it's helping you move away from their sword while they are moving, making it very difficult for them to bring the point back and thrust you.

Exercise - run through the play. Coach starts out static, then feeds slow longpoint thrusts. Sometimes the coach should disengage. Fencer focuses on entering and getting their foot position correct.

Application 2: halfsword 12r - 15 minutes

With the continuation 12v

This is the text and the gloss of yet another play against the displacing

74 *Set-upon four ends;*

Learn to remain thereupon if you wish to finish.

Gloss. *This is when you cleave-in from your right shoulder: if you wish to quickly finish with him, so note when he displaces [and] strike quickly around with the thwart, and with the strike grasp your sword in the middle of the blade with the left hand, and set the point into the face (as stands pictured next), or set-upon him to the four openings to whichever you can best come.*

Item. *Note, when you set the point into his face with the half-sword (as stands done before next to this): if he displaces that, jab him with the pommel to the other side to his head, or spring with the right foot behind his left and with the pommel drive around his neck, over his right shoulder, [and] around the front of the neck, and with that, back him over your right leg (as stands pictured hereafter next to this).*

- Demonstrate the play as a direct action
 - Particular emphasis on going from twer/halfsword to the throw
- Demonstrate using the cross-step with the twer to crash the point in.
 - And how this positioning sets up the movement for the throw.

The crossed step here is adding power to the movement - continuing the line of motion (forward and slightly out to your right) to drive very very strongly through their parry. That in turn makes it extremely difficult for them to prevent the halfsword thrust from landing - and if they manage to, the amount of pressure they commit makes it very easy to continue to the pommel strike or to the throw.

Exercise: try both the direct thrust and the continuation after a parry. Coach, start pretty co-operative and slowly increase resistance.

Application 3: nachreissen 13v - 15 minutes

This is yet another play text and gloss about racing-after

79 Traveling-after twice:

If one joins, make the farewell cut with it.

Gloss. *Note, this is when he mis-hews himself before you: so race after him with a hew to the upper opening; if he then drives up and binds under you upon the sword, so note just as soon as one sword sparks on the other, [and] so fall upon him from the sword with the long-edge over his arm, and also press him from you (as stands pictured next), or cut him from the sword through the mouth. Deploy this to both sides.*

- Show the nachreissen play - they cut and miss, you strike, they parry and lift up
 - Now we need to fall onto the arms. This is difficult from a straight in front position.
- By stepping the right foot across the left, a line onto the arms opens up
 - Then can reorient again to press them away

A third potential use of footwork like this is to change a line quickly, by moving the leading foot across. This is one of the interpretations I'm least convinced about - it can work, but it's complex and tricky under pressure. The key is to take a straight step, but instead of transferring weight onto the right foot as it lands, tap off with it immediately and move it to your left across the left leg. Then you can get the blade onto the arms or face and realign to drive the slice in.

Exercise - run through the play. Again, coach, you can slowly increase the resistance. Be careful not to deliberately break the action though - you aren't expecting this. It's very easy to cheat this during a fixed drill. If you're not wearing forearm protection, use the flat. Coach, cooperate with the press if they are. It's better than making them use the edge.

Alternative interpretation - 15 minutes

What if this is all a wild goose chase? The illustrations are still odd.

So, another possible reading is that these are intended to show a temporal cue: completing the blade action while the step is still in-potentia - perhaps to make sure you've cleared a line before entering.

- Schiel - show how you can do the cut, hold the step and then let the thrust go in
- Halfsword - wind the sword across, then drop into the step to drive it in

Take a couple of minutes, play with both of those. Have a discussion about which interpretation seems to be smoother and more consistent.

Summary - 10 minutes

Demonstrate the main interpretations

- Show schiel cross step - get behind their sword
- Show halfsword cross step - go through their sword
- Show nachreissen cross step - quickly adjust the line

This is still very much a work in progress concept. You can try and incorporate this into your fencing, though - it does set up some fun actions and options which people really aren't expecting a bunch of the time.

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