

# Coming to the Fight

*The May Melee, May 25th 2018*

This class is intended as an introductory session on some of the core tactics used in early Liechtenauer glosses. We'll look at the three main ways to cross the threshold and begin to fight:

- Pressure with the long point
- Use the *vorsetzen*
- *Nachreissen*

Following the example of Masters of Longsword, this class is separated into two parts, of approximately 30 minutes each. The break between should also be at least 30 minutes.

Necessary gear:

- Part 1: Mask, sword
- Part 2: Mask, gloves, sword

## Part 1: Langort

### Warmup

Hand fencing game - right hand is a sword, left is a buckler. Targets are upper arm and thigh. The aim is just to get people moving quickly and efficiently.

### Theory: *Zufechten*

Liechtenauer's *zettel* and its glosses talk about *zufechten* - 'to the fight' - the process of choosing to enter fencing distance (about six feet) and begin to fight. Ideally we should act first, to take control and force our opponent to react. To achieve this, we should make a plan about how to act *before* entering the fight.

Liechtenauer gives three basic plans for initial actions - threaten with *langort*, use the *vier vorsetzen*, and use *nachreissen*.

This limited menu is deliberate, since it allows us to analyse the situation and make an acceptable action extremely quickly, which is more effective for seizing the initiative. If we want to fence in a Liechtenauer style, we should use one of these plans.

Of course, when we come to the fight the opponent may also attack first, requiring us to react - in this situation, we have to reach for alternative techniques, like the zornhaw or absetzen. This situation (and responding to it) is outside the scope of this class.

## **Langort**

The first way to enter the fight is by putting the point in their face, at this six foot initial distance.

This doesn't hit by itself, but it creates a compelling threat for the opponent to have to deal with. In most cases, they will try to parry or control the sword in some way, so you can work to a new opening by some means.

In order to maintain pressure on the opponent, it is vitally important not to hesitate. If they don't parry, stab them at once. If they retreat, chase them to maintain this pressure.

All exercises begin from 9ft+ apart.

### **Exercise:**

- Fencer advances to 6ft and enters langort.
- *Coach does nothing.*
- Fencer continues with a thrust.

### **Exercise:**

- Fencer advances to 6ft and enters langort.
- *Coach does a straight parry.*
- Fencer continues to a new opening with a nachschlag

### **Exercise:**

- Fencer advances to 6ft and enters langort.
- *Coach attempts to beat the blade.*
- Fencer uses durchwechseln to avoid it and thrusts.

**Exercise:**

- Fencer advances to 6ft and enters langort.
- *Coach binds with the point in presence.*
- Fencer continues with a wind and thrust.

**Exercise:**

- Fencer advances to 6ft and enters langort.
- *Coach does any of the previous options.*
- Fencer continues in an appropriate manner.

## 30 minute break

## Part 2: Vorsetzen and Nachreisen

Using langort to enter the fight is fairly simple, but can be defeated in a number of ways (schilhaw, zornhaw, etc - beyond the scope of this class in general). So we are given two other approaches as well.

### Vorsetzen

This is used to break 'the guards' - the vier leger or hutten. These are the four basic positions which someone can fight from, and for the purpose of today how they're formed is largely irrelevant. The only relevant details are "high or low" and "thrust or cut".

For each of these four positions, we have a prescribed attack, known as a vorsetzen. These are attacks which create a credible threat and are reasonably safe. They will not necessarily end the fight by themselves, but will give us a way to enter with advantage and continue from that point.

For the vorsetzen, start with the sword just above your strong-side shoulder, ready to cut down. Place your left foot forward as you come to fighting distance.

**Exercise:** Adapted from Jake Norwood

- Fencer steps to fighting distance, left foot forward.
- *Coach assumes one of the vier leger*
- Fencer throws appropriate vorsetzen.
- Fencer retreats back from measure to start the drill again.

## Nachreissen

The vier vorsetzen are a fantastic tool to use when the opponent is staying still. If they move, however, we have another option: nachreissen. This is attacking into the opening that they are creating by moving, in this case when they move to prepare their weapon to attack.

When using nachreissen, it's very important to make the attack while the opponent is moving - do not wait until after they have finished.

### Exercise:

- Fencer advances in pflug or tag
- *Coach draws up to cut*
- Fencer interrupts with thrust or cut, based on their initial position.

### Exercise:

- Fencer advances in langort.
- *Coach draws up to cut*
- Fencer falls with the long edge onto the coach's arms and displaces them.

You can extend this idea to handle guard changes by mixing it with the vier vorsetzen, using the appropriate vorsetzen for the position the opponent is moving into.

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