Swords

**Name** Felicity Steel.

**Job** Sword fight choreographer.

**Where** The Australian Shakespeare Company.

**Why is it important?** I’m a fight designer so I choreograph all kinds of violence on stage. I’m called in to solve movement problems if someone has to fall on stage or the show has some rough-and-tumble scenes. Most of the shows I do are Shakespearean, so I can’t work without swords: there will be swords for *Macbeth* or *Romeo and Juliet*, which I’m working with at the moment.

**What do your colleagues think?** In a film you have a wonderful stunt person who can come in and do the rights, but in theatre I train the actors what to do. In *Romeo and Juliet*, Romeo has to kill Tybalt and it has to happen with a lot of energy, seven or eight times a week. So the actors have to be quite skilled.

**Unusual moment?** The most formative unusual moment for me was the day I learnt not to choreograph disarming a sword on the audience side. The sword slithered off the stage into a front seat, which was, coincidentally and in harmony with the universe, empty.

**How much does it cost?** In Elizabethan times, having a well-designed sword was almost like having a racing car. You can get beautiful swords at $500 each. But if I buy a sturdy, safe sword with a replaceable blade I can use with a lot of actors, they’re about $240 each.

SUE WHITE

Blade runner ... Felicity Steel trains actors in combat. Photo: Joseph Fell