

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

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 fights, 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 Feil