

Rapier Workshop at HEMA Celje 2025: The Passata in Rapier – Fabris Loves it More Than the Lunge

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Introduction

In rapier fencing, the *passata* often gets overlooked in favour of the lunge, yet it is a versatile and powerful attack. Fabris even tells us:

“Doppo queste raggioni è buono anco lo sapere passare cosa molto proffitteuole, & uantaggiosa, perche si turba, & si mette in maggiore timore il nimico, si ferisce con più forza, & si mostra maggiore ualore, il corpo, la spada, & li piedi uanno più uniti, laquale unione genera forza, & uiuacità nell’ operare, & nell’ andare si può mutare di uno in un’ altro effetto comodamente, talmente che il nimico non può se non difficilmente diffendersi, & non ha comodità di fare molte cose, perche l’occasione passa presto, ne meno hà tempo di ben giudicare, & come si hà penetrato la punta egli non può più ferire;”

So we are going to explore this movement in detail with the help of some exercises.

Exercises

1. Before we take up swords, walk a few lengths with passing steps, paying attention to:
 - shifting the weight to the front foot
 - turning the left foot outwards when placing it forward
 - placing your weight on the left foot
 - lowering your right knee so it (almost) touches the ground and is close to your left heel (to check the stride-length)
1. Start in a straight terza guard with the weight on the rear foot. Your partner stands in front of you to your inside and places his extended sword with point resting on your rear hip, applying pressure. You begin the movement of the passing step, pushing forward with the rear

hip against this pressure while also pushing your sword-side forward with the sword extended in quarta.

Make sure you do not:

- step too far, a step the length of your lower leg is enough
 - step to far off-line to the inside
 - bumping up and down during the movement
- 2.
- A: Stand in terza guard with the arm extended and in profile, with your opponent to your inside in wide measure
 - B: Step forward and also bring your body forward
 - A: Attack with a *passata* in quarta inside with opposition.
 - B: Try to break measure

This gets you accustomed to perform the motion upon a tempo.

- 3.
- A: Start in terza guard on your outside in wide measure, then begin to find the opponents blade
 - B: Perform a cavazione and attack with a thrust in quarta on the inside
 - A: Counter with a *passata* in quarta in opposition
- 4.
- A: Start in terza guard on your outside in wide measure, then begin to find the opponents blade
 - B: Attack the head with a mandritto cut over the blade from the wrist by stepping forward with a lunge
 - A: Counter with a *passata* in quarta in opposition
- 5.
- A: Start in terza guard on your inside in wide measure, then begin to find the opponents blade, move further and push his blade off-line to the inside
 - B: Take the tempo and perform a cavazione to the outside and attack with a lunge in seconda
 - A: Drop your body and counter with a seconda *free below* the opponents blade with a *passata*
- 6.
- A: Start in terza guard on your outside in wide measure, then feint a thrust in quarta high on the outside
 - B: Parry high and upward to your outside

- A: Come forward with a *passata*, turn your hilt from quarta to seconda to parry and grab the opponents hilt or forte from a hand position of prima with your free hand, then twist his arm towards his outside to disarm him
- 7.
- A: Start in terza guard on your inside in wide measure, then begin to find the opponents blade, move further and push his blade off-line to the inside
 - B: Take the tempo and perform a cavazione to the outside and attack with a lunge in seconda
 - A: Bring your rear foot around to your outside while turning on your front foot, thereby performing a body void, *passing* toward the outside, while you counterthrust in quarta free below the opponents blade