

Workshop Dreynevent 2026: Principles of Retta Linea – the Direct Line

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Introduction

The concept of the straight line applies to all forms of swordfighting, one-handed with or without off-hand weapon, and two-handed. Yet in this workshop we will focus on the single rapier, where this principle can be observed and understood very clearly.

The definition of “retta linea”, the direct line is: “The line that passes from your sword–armpit through your hilt to the opponent’s sword–armpit”

That implies your hilt needs to be in front of your sword armpit/shoulder at all times; if it is not, it is called an *invitation* – if you are aware of it.

We will use a form of approach, taken from Salvator Fabris’ treatise “Scienza et Pratica del’Arme”: proceeding with resolution. This allows us to focus on the lines of the sword without getting distracted by footwork too much.

Preparation Exercise

To get a feel for ‘keeping the hilt in the straight line’ we will start with a simple pre-exercise: With the sword extended *straight from the shoulder to the point*, walk around randomly with straight steps, passing steps, linear, circle-wise, while focusing on the placement of the arm in relation to your body.

Pair Exercises—Proceeding with resolution

Now, we continue in pairs. We use the abovementioned proceeding with resolution or *caminare* to amplify any error and keep the focus on the upper body and lines of attack and defense.

1. One person just stands in guard unarmed, the other person approaches with small, fluid passing steps, from far out of measure with the sword extended as before and aims at the partner’s sword shoulder, eventually touching it with the point
2. • A: Stand in guard with the sword extended, with the point clearly either to the *inside* or *outside*.

- B: Approach as before with fluid passing steps and walk towards the opponent's sword as close as possible without touching it, checking the position in wide measure, then continue on to his body, keeping your sword hand in *terza* guard.

3. Like 2) above, but turn your hand into opposition when stepping into the hit, inside in *quarta*, outside in *terza*, *seconda* or *prima*, depending on height.
4. Like 3), but *stringer* your opponent's sword as soon as you have found his point, then continue onwards, keeping the advantage to the hit.
5.
 - A: Stand in guard with the sword extended, invite uncovered on one side
 - B: Approach like above in 4)
 - A: As soon as A steps into measure, attack with a thrust by *cavatione*
 - B: Counter in opposition

Pair Exercises—From Misura Larga

From misura larga, being mindful of the direct line:

1.
 - A: Inside/outside with a *stringere* of the opponent's sword
 - B: Attack with lunge by *cavatione*
 - A: Counter in opposition
2.
 - A: Inside/outside with a *stringere* of the opponent's sword
 - B: Push the blade off-line
 - A: Attack with lunge by *cavatione*
 - B: Try to counter directly, which should not work if RL was correct.

Intentionally Giving up the Retta Linea

Sometimes it is a good idea to *intentionally* give up the straight line to entice an otherwise cautious or timid enemy to attack. As soon as we move our hilt out of line, we *know* that we cannot undo the movement and counter with the forte of the sword while wounding in the same tempo.

When the opponent attacks our opening, we can either defend with a hand parry or a body void. To simplify things, we will choose the former.

- A: Stand in *terza* guard extended
- B: Having found A's blade with a *stringere*, push his sword sideways out of line, thereby removing your own hilt from the *retta linea*
- A: Attack with a high thrust by *cavatione*
- B: Parry with your free hand in the high line, while countering with a lunging thrust in the low line

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