

# Combat Sport

Corlan McCollum

Conductors at the ready, baton twirlers  
armed and poised, the band is en garde,  
ready, fence, and the symphony begins  
with the first chair lunging, the brass section  
coming alive as sabers clash, parry, riposte,  
the touch goes to your opponent.

Go back to your en garde position,  
twist your back foot perpendicular to your front,  
squeak the rubber of your sole on the floor.  
Shoulder width apart, find your balance, bend your knees,  
hear *fence!* and summon the drums,  
stomp your foot and stop your opponent.  
Time stops, the orchestra lulls.

You have the right of way! Move!  
As fast as the strings of a violin warble,  
aim to cut across the chest,  
the blade whistling as you swing.  
Then the horns resound again,  
they parry, you beat, and the light chimes -  
the touch goes to your dueler.  
The opera approaches its climax,  
the diva is belting her final notes.  
Find a strategy, bend your knees, *fence!*  
Arm up, blade straight out, foot forward,  
classic, obvious prise de fer,  
so they stop advancing and cut  
across your vest. Your guts would spill  
on the battlefield, centuries ago.  
You sigh with the woodwinds,  
the bout goes to the enemy.