

The Punta Falsa

Excerpt from the forthcoming
*Mastering the Art of Arms volume 3: Longsword
Advanced Techniques and Concepts*

Due out in 2016

This excerpt will be easier to follow if you have read *Mastering the Art of Arms volume 2: The Medieval Longsword*, [available here](#).

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Thanks for reading,

yours,

Guy Windsor



This is how I actually write. Really. Just like this.

The Punta Falsa

There is rarely only one solution to a given problem. Against a defender parrying from the right, while the pommel strike is fine, there is a better option. One of the most stylish techniques in the system is the *punta falsa*, literally “false thrust”. Fiore’s instructions are very detailed:

“I show that I am coming with great force to strike the player with a middle blow in the head [in other words, make sure he sees it coming]. And immediately that he makes the cover I strike his sword lightly. And immediately turn my sword to the other side, grabbing my sword with my left hand about at the middle. And I place the thrust immediately in the throat or in the chest. , and immediately that he makes the cover I strike his sword lightly, and make a turn to my sword, grasping the blade by the middle with your left hand...” (translation mine).

This is the 18th play of the second master of the *zogho largo*, and so in its basic form is done as a riposte after a successful parry of the first attack (as shown by said master). It can of course be done any time there is an opening to throw the mezano feint, but let’s start out being strictly canonical. We bring this to life like so:

1. Attacker strikes *mandritto fendente*
2. Parry from the right into *frontale*, beating the attacker’s sword wide.
3. Keep the motion going to strike a *mandritto mezano*, leaving your hands high and to the left.
4. Attacker parries with *frontale*
5. Strike lightly on his sword, and turn your sword hand over,
6. Turning your sword around the midpoint
7. Reaching for the middle of your sword with your left hand and

8. Thrusting him in the mask, with an *accrescere* if needed.

Figures : punta falsa



Guy attacks with a *mandritto fendente*, Mikko parries with *frontale*.



Mikko feints with a *mezano*, Guy parries.



Mikko turns his sword, grabs it by the middle, and stabs Guy in the face with an *accrescere*.

Common issues with the *punta falsa*

When practising the *punta falsa*, there are some things to bear in mind.

- Make sure you leave enough space to turn your sword when feinting. A small step offline with the back foot can help, when making the feint.
- Keep the turn of the sword tight, by rotating it around the midpoint of the blade, then let the point lead you in.
- Cross-handed pairs will find that the *punta falsa* only works when there is a forehand (*mandritto*) *mezano* being met by a parry on the inside of the attack. This allows the turn to half-sword, which is only mechanically possible from this situation. A left-hander will therefore need to strike the *mezano* to generate a parry from their opponent's left side; right-handers need to draw a parry from the opponent's right side.

Countering the *punta falsa*

Fiore shows the counter in the last play of the *zogho largo*; the instruction is simplicity itself, but the action is very counterintuitive for most people.

“When the scholar strikes on my sword, in the turn that he makes with his sword, I immediately make a turn to mine, in the same way that he makes a turn to his. Only I also pass across to find the companion more uncovered. And I place the thrust in his face.” (Translation mine.)

The exact nature of the blade action and the relationship between the weapons was first figured out, as far as I know, by Sean Hayes, at WMAW 2006. We had just attended a lecture on the manuscript, and seen really high resolution scans for the first time- so clear that places where the manuscript had been corrected (by scraping off the original ink and redrawing a line) could be seen. The counter-remedy master's sword was suddenly, clearly, on the inside of the player's (the one trying to do the *punta falsa*). I will never forget the time, half an hour later, when Sean tried out this interpretation on me, and sold it in one go, as my attack collapsed as his point magically appeared in my mask...

To work then:

1. Attack with a *mandritto fendente*
2. Defender parries from the right into *frontale*, beating the your sword wide.
3. Defender keeps the motion going to strike a *mandritto mezano*, leaving his hands high and to the left.
4. You parry his *mezano* with *frontale*
5. Defender strikes lightly on your sword, and as he turns his sword hand over,
 1. You turn yours, inside the defender's movement,
 2. Passing diagonally left with your left foot
 3. Reaching for the middle of your sword with your left hand and
 4. Strike, bringing your right foot back and around.

Figure: *punta falsa* countered.



As Mikko turns his sword, Guy turns his, inside Mikko's.



And Guy grabs his sword by the middle, while passing offline, and is about to thrust Mikko in the face.

Note that Guy's sword is *inside* Mikko's:



Perhaps the most common problem when attempting this counter is ending up outside your opponent's sword. Don't worry, that's how everybody did this play for years. It works, it just takes longer. It can also be documented in other sources, so it's even historically accurate. But if your partner does it, yield immediately to pommel strike on the other side.



You can find the *punta falsa* on the Syllabus Wiki [here](#).

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