

Dancing with Razor Blades

Capoeira, the Brazilian martial art, which forms an integral part of the play, is a style of combat originally practised by the African slaves of Brazil. Developing techniques from their homelands, they fought with their feet, sometimes holding cutlasses or razors between their toes.

By Adam Strickson.

A play for Burnley Youth Theatre

(As *One* project, March – August 03)

Scene 1**Power, the arrest and mutilation of Tidore, and Gunzallez' plan*****Gunzallez' chamber in the fenced centre of Burnt-lee: the entertainment quarter or 'Glazy Complex'.***

When the audience enter, Gunzallez is sleeping, strapped to a trolley, standing up, guarded by Ultimate, who stands behind the trolley. From either side of the trolley, swathes of shiny, luminous material are held by two slaves, hiding the plane wing behind. A TV on a stand. The slaves wear long coats and hats over their eyes. From behind the sheet, we hear the Borderers:

Doof: The bastard!

Cashman: Snores

Starling: Belches

Dias: Farts

Doof: Spits

Cashman: Wakes up.

Gunzallez does a big yawn and freezes in the yawn.

Doof: Gunzallez

Starling: Gun...

Dias: zallez

Cashman: Spain man

Doof: Greedy man

Starling: Power man

Dias: Thinks he owns us

Doof: Blew away the centre

Cashman: Burnt it to the ground

Starling: Burnt-lee!

Doof: Put the fence up...

Cashman: Built the Rolling Rooms

Dias: The Honolulu Pools

Doof: The Click-clack Shop

Cashman: The Pueblo

Starling: The whole Glazy Complex

Dias: His pleasure dome

Cashman: His wonderland

Doof: Wants us as his slaves

Dias: No chance!

Ultimate: *(Half whispered)*

Gunzallez...Gun-zallez
 snores power, farts terror.
 Greedy Gunzallez,
 main man in Burnt-lee, 2 1 0 3,
 (once was Burnley, now Burnt-lee).
 Clock House, Stoneyholme, Duke Bar –
 now the ash-lands, torched, burnt-out,
 and here, bang slap in the centre,
 his glass world, his Glazy Complex:
 virtual sun, virtual sea,
 virtual sand, virtual sex, and him,
 Gunzallez, king of the whole thing,
 king - with the face of a dump rat!

Gunzallez: *(Waking up, suddenly and loudly)* Ulty, switch on Channel 8. I want ten minutes of Tom and Jerry.

Static, followed by the beginning of video 1.

Ultimate: Interference again boss...it's them forest monkeys hackin' in.

Video 1.

Late in the day. Sunlight through trees in leaf. Reds/greens.

Quisara's face reflected in a pool.

The shimmering image gradually changes to a shot of her normal face, which is still for three seconds.

The camera then shifts to include her upper body as well.

Speech 1:

Listen...you there...stop...listen

Ami Quisara...yes, I'm Quisara -

I grew up here in The Edible Forest,
in Gram Verde 4, with hare and wolf,
three days hard trek from Burnt-lee...

Video continues under the dialogue.

Gunzalez: Whoah...Quisara!

Ultimate: Forest panani! Wouldn't mind-

Gunzalez: Usual word crap though.

Ultimate: Usual crap, boss.

Gunzalez: Giffin' forest, giffin' apples.

Ultimate: Tits like bombs though.

Gunzallez: *(He makes a kissing noise)* Nice twist of jelabi. I'll buy her.

Ultimate: Suck her, boss.

Gunzallez: Yeah, bite hard and lick out the syrup.

Ultimate: Better than giffin' apples!

Gunzallez: Yeah!

The image of Quisara disappears from the screen and adverts come on.

Fetch in the first.

Cuffie brings in Tidore, who is dressed in ragged clothes.

Ultimate: Smells of monkey crap boss.

Gunzallez: And... giffin' orchards.

Tidore: I am Tidore, brother of Quisara, scion of the Edible Forest.

Gunzallez and Ultimate laugh. Cuffie joins in, but is silenced by Ultimate.

Ultimate: Yeah! You scruff!

Gunzallez: Do it!

Ultimate: Yeah, crack his forest nuts.

Cuffie kicks Tidore.

Nice one!

Cuffie: Found these on him, Signor.

He shows him a pair of secateurs.

Gunzallez: No hardware.

Cuffie: No hardware, Signor.

Gunzallez holds the secateurs next to Tidore's ear.

Gunzallez: What are they for then, tree boy?

Tidore: Pruning.

Gunzallez: Think I'll do some.

He closes the secateurs on Tidore's ear.

Tidore: Desist! I am Tidore, brother of Quisara.

Gunzallez: And I'm a giffin' Chinese chef! What you doin' here?

Tidore: Wanted to see...the other side. I saw it on the screens...the Glazy Complex...the sandy beach, the ladies -

Gunzallez: Bet you did. Wanted a piece, eh? Couple of nights in the Rolling Rooms, a night at the Pueblo. Not for bandor boys like you.

Tidore: See! My sister!

He hands over a pendant of Quisara.

Gunzallez: Quisara. Uity?

Ultimate: Quisara alright.

Gunzallez: Real thing?

Ultimate: Could be boss.

Gunzallez: Thought your life was some sort of giffin' forest paradise. Your sister says so...and her minders...hack in for hours, bore the arses of us with gatherin' times, soil samples... harvest giffin' festivals...don't they know how to have a good time?

Tidore: Wanted to see –

Ultimate: Down a skinful and shoot some board, that's what all you monkeys want.

Gunzallez: If you're her brother, she'll come and save you.

(Gunzallez:) Cut off his arm.

Now!

His arm is cut off and brought out by Cuffie, wrapped in a greasy cloth.

Cuffie: Signor!

Gunzallez: Ulty, cauterise and strap him up. We need him still breathin'.
Channel 8 - Cartoons.

Cuffie puts the video on. On screen interference again, then video 1.

Soon it will be the sweet time:
Why not come? Enjoy our soft play.

Gunzallez: Off!

Cuffie turns the screen off. Ultimate comes out from behind the cloth.

Ultimate: Job done. Cauterised, anaesthetized. Monkey boy thinks he's sleeping in the trees.

Gunzallez: Now, Ulty, Cuffie, go straight to the Borderers at the plane wing. Take Tidore's arm and the pendant. Promise Dias and his gang a couple o' nights in the Rolling Rooms, access to the Click-clack shop, the Honolulu pools, the whole giffin' experience – they slaver like giffin' dogs for it – if they take this message to the forest monkeys: 'I, Gunzallez, governor of Burnt-lee, proprietor of the Glazy Complex, want Quisara, forest panani, polished up and gaggin' for it, or I'll feed her giffin' one arm brother to the Dunnockshaw pig-men.' Got it.

Cuffie: Dunnockshaw pig-men, Signor!

Ultimate: Double mean that, boss. Those pig-men don't even shit out the bones.

Gunzallez: Go!

Scene 2

Gunzallez' deal with the Borderers

In front of the plane wing. A circle or 'roda' is marked out and the Borderers are 'playing' the hard version of capoeira. A sound accompaniment made by banging on the plane and striking pieces of scrap. Whooping, excitement.

Brodar and Doof are playing. Everyone else is mirroring their movements, focussing the energy.

Dias: Jinga, jinga.

Starling: Foot sweep.

Cashman: Lock, lock...hold

Dias: Cut him up.

Cashman: Super red-neck! Go, go.

Doof: Change! Starling.

Doof leaves the roda. Brodar continues moving. Starling stands at the edge of the circle.

Starling: Starling man, history man,
scavenger of scraps, fixer of screens:
permission to enter, do what I can.

Dias: Into the roda.

Starling and Brodar play.

Cashman: Hey laddu!

Doof: High kick. Razor blade!

Cashman: Flap your wings.

Dias: Give him some beak.

Brodar signs 'Change', asking Cashman to replace him.

Dias: Cashman.

Cashman: Spin in my chair, top half man.
Nothin' to lose cos' I'm a dying man.

Dias: Into the roda.

Cashman and Starling play.

Cashman: I am an extreme atheist.

Doof: Sweep, Duke Bar man.

Cashman: There has never been a God.

Dias: Shut it and fight!

Doof: Kill the birdy!

Brodar: Kill!

Brodar signs 'Stuff him'.

Doof: Yeah, and eat him for tea.

Starling: Change. Dias.

Dias: Suit man, briefcase man.
I am your leader,
I am your dealer
so deal with me!

Doof: Into the roda.

Cashman and Dias play.

Cashman: Do not let any belief destroy your life.

Dias: Shut it!

Doof: Higher.

Starling: Over the chair.

Dias: Not enough sleep.

Brodar signs that Dias is unfit.

Doof: Yeah, fat ass gangsta!

Cashman: Change. Doof.

Doof: Doof the strong, Doof the proud:
Ah'm the man with the lion an' the shield an' the bees
so get ready Dias, ah'm gonna bring you to your knees.

Starling: Into the roda.

Doof and Dias play. Brodar signs that Doof is really tough.

Cashman: Bounty hunter!

Starling: Burnt-lee boy.

Brodar: Kill! (*Brodar signs 'killer kick'.*)

Dias: Enough. Change. Brodar.

Brodar: Hands...Brodar: hands.

Brodar signs an introduction, while Starling says the following words:

Starling: Hand sign man, where did you come from?
Where do you go? We'd like to know.

Cashman: Into the roda.

Doof and Brodar play.

Starling: Whooah...glad I wasn't on the end of that one.

Dias: Some monkey stuff in there.

Cashman: Psyche him out.

Starling: Duck and dive.

Cashman: An' survive!

Dias: Jinga. Both out.

Starling: Twist the dials. See what I can get. A bit to the left,
a little bit to the right. There...ah, got one screen.

Dias: Tune the big one man.

Starling: I'm tuning. Got it!

Doof: Quisara.

Video 1

Soon it will be the sweet time:

Why not come? Enjoy our soft play –

Shadowy images of Gardar and Galdar doing soft capoeira in the background – close ups on soft use of hands and the leg spin/turn, which alternate with images of Quisara for the rest of the speech.

born in the Senzalas far away,
fluid as the streams of Cliviger.
Xinga to the rhythms of the bolumbumba

Doof: Whooah...I'd bolumbumba with you anytime, darling.

Cashman: What a babe! *(He makes a rude sign)*

Dias: How about Saturday night then?

Brodar makes signs which indicate his interest in Quisara.

Doof: Sit on this (*He makes a sign*)

Starling: Listen.

Enter the roda to find the soul of the drum.
Spin dance the September nights away
and taste the juice of our edible forest.

She bites into the apple.

Dias: Yeah, taste your juice.

Doof: Them lot can't fight – it's all soft stuff.

Brodar signs 'watch out, be careful'. Ultimate and Cuffie approach.

Starling: Gunzalez' men.

Doof: Gunzalez' lick arse an' a pimple.

Dias: Screens off.

Ultimate: (*He makes a sign of greeting*) Borderers.
Roy Dias, I need to talk with you.

Dias: Talk away. We're all friends here...

Pause.

Ultimate unravels the greasy cloth, revealing the arm.

Doof: Chucked up yer breekie again.

Ultimate: You've heard of Quisara?

The Borderers make suitable noises and signs.

This is her brother's arm, cut off by me an hour ago.
And this (*He takes the pendant from his pocket*)
pendant is taken from her brother's neck.

Dias: What's the deal?

Cuffie: The Signor wishes -
Doof: (*mocking*) The Signor!

Cuffie: I'll stick one on you, Borderer.

- Ultimate: This is the deal -
You take this arm, and this pendant, straight to Quisara and tell her that her brother's stuffed unless she comes back with you and gets knocked off by the boss, and here's the good bit -
- Cashman: No forest. Borderers don't do.
- Dias: Shut it!
- Ultimate: You know the Rolling Rooms?
- Starling: On the screens, here –
- Ultimate: Where the air is perfumed, where the bikinis plunge and dip? The Click-clack Shop, where you can win a year at the Honolulu pools? Well, all that and all the other delights of the Glazy Complex are yours to enjoy for a year if you bring the goods back, all dressed up and ready to go go go with Gunzallez.
- Cashman: We are the Borderers.
- Starling: The forest is not for us –
- Dias: Wooses! He's talking the Glazy Complex...long nights in the Rolling Rooms.
- Starling: Three days hard-trek, that's what Quisara says. You've heard her.

Brodar makes signs to say that it will be a very difficult journey

- Doof: I'm up for it.
- Cashman: Bullets follow bombs. Darkness follows light.
- Dias: Yeah right. Time scale?
- Ultimate: Three days there, three days back and no touchy feely on the way back.
- Doof: You're jokin'. She's –
- Dias: No touching, I'll see to it. What's the guarantee?
- Ultimate: You bring her back n' Gunzallez'll do anything for you, guarantee!
- Dias: Glazy Complex tokens – five hundred in advance.

Ultimate: I said bring her back and you'll have the freedom of the complex for a year.

Dias: Five hundred in advance.

Ultimate: I'll make sure you get them.

Dias: I'll fetch them.

Ultimate: Follow.

Dias: Doof comes too.

Ultimate and Cuffie leave, followed by Dias and Doof.

Starling: A forest trip then boys.

Cashman: I'll stay here.

Starling: Yeah, you be the guard, look after the brew, and the screens.

Cashman: Weapon here *(He points down the side of his wheelchair)*

Brodar makes signs, indicating that he can guide the Borderers through the forest.

Starling: He says...he says he's been there before. He knows...he knows the paths. He can guide us into the forest.

Cashman: Bet he can't guide you out.