



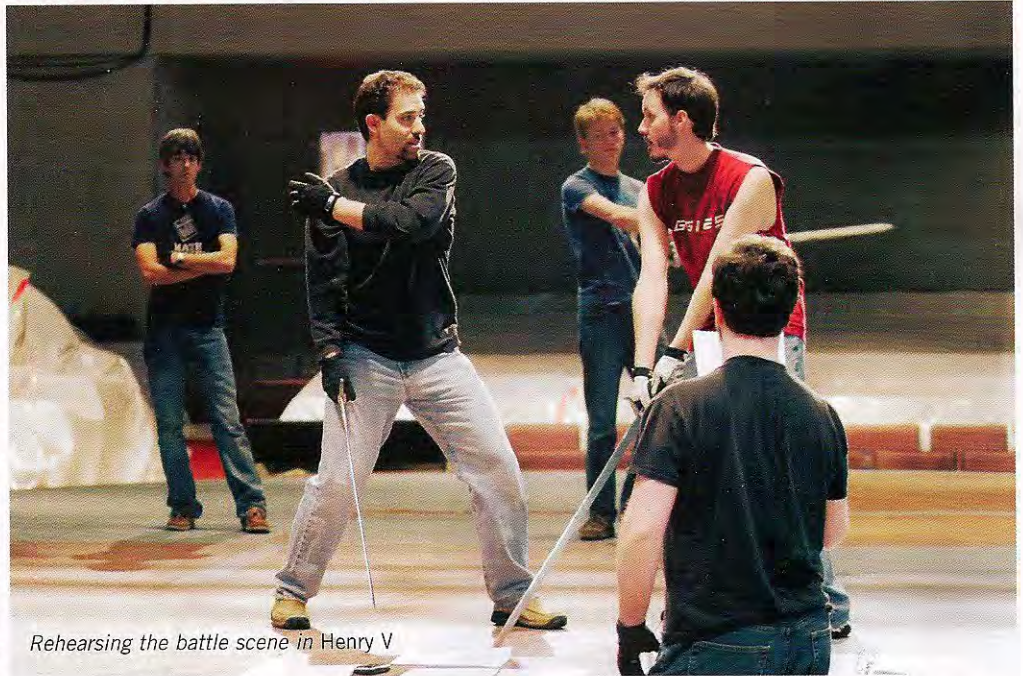
A melding of minds

The distinct disciplines of theater and engineering acted as a band of brothers recently to make Shakespeare's *Henry V* come alive, both theatrically and mechanically.

As the UA Department of Theatre and Dance prepared for the spring performance, assistant professor Seth Panitch wanted to bring new life to the play. "I've always felt that any time you can take classical theater and make it immediate, it's more powerful than anything else, because the ideas and the passions within tend to be larger than modern theater," he said.

While brainstorming ideas to bring more excitement to the performance, he went to a mechanical engineering design class taught by Dr. Beth Todd, associate professor in the College of Engineering, for help.

He presented the class



Rehearsing the battle scene in Henry V

with a set of problems. He wanted special effects for the big battle scene, and he wanted a hanging that occurs offstage in Shakespeare's text to be shown live onstage instead, to reveal more of the character of the newly crowned Henry. "It's one thing for him to hear that it's

happened; it's another thing for him to see it and actually give the order," Panitch said.

The engineering students embraced the tasks, and after breaking down into eight groups, began to work on the projects, brainstorming ideas and then converting them into working prototypes. One

group created an effect that would have fog rise up from under the audience. A second developed a way to simulate the hanging onstage using a harness.

Panitch and his theater staff learned a lot from the innovations, he said, particularly from the group that rigged the hanging device. He noted they did "a really wonderful job in constructing not only a harness, but figuring out a way to cross-brace it so the whole piece wouldn't fall over when a person dropped three to four feet."

Buckling on buses

The University Transportation Center for Alabama is conducting a pilot study on the impact of seat belts in Alabama school buses.

Using a limited number of buses, the three-year study is monitoring the seat belt's effect on student behavior and the extra time devoted to



Jay Lindly