

My review of 2018's NESY – One System, One Love

"I'm telling you, this is gonna be a really busy weekend, especially the first day. That's a 14-hour shift for us," I said to my teacher and co-instructor Steffen "M3" Schneider during the final preparations for this year's symposium. "Maybe, but it will be mega funny again", he quickly replied and how should he be right, this freshly baked master...

Following our embarrassing tradition, it started on Saturday morning the typical Speyer way: only 30 minutes later than originally planned we set off. There's always something not going right, we're always late. Even if it was only a few minutes in the end, it gave Master Bernd and Master Falk the chance to speak out their usual "can't you be on time ONCE?!?" along with a gloating grin. And then it all started - a huge group of cheerful Escrimadoras and Escrimadores, ready for the fray and taking up the entire width of the gym, stood up to greet us. Off we went!

Day 1...

... was again dedicated to Master Bernd, whose theme this year was "War Sword". There were five sessions of 60 min each for the one-and-a-half handed sword, interrupted by 20 or 30 minute breaks, beautiful in alternation and absolutely necessary. This new concept quickly turned out to be a very wise decision by Master Bernd. Working one hour at a time with iron (some with wood) is not a piece of cake and literally screams for regular recovery phases. It was easy to see that this year's session-and-pause concept was working out well, because of the unbroken good mood and the motivation of the participants! (I suspect that it was actually due to the fabulously good coffee and cake service of Master Bernd's better half, Bettina, but I'd rather not say that out loud... ☺ ☺ ☺)

Also characteristic for this clever division of sessions and breaks was the fact that we've reached 4.40pm in the wink of an eye and thus the end of the first day. Now it was time to "take pictures!"



Afterwards the participants could take a deep breath and had one hour to freshen up in their rooms and change their clothes.

For us instructors there was no break, the gym had to be prepared for the evening event. Thanks to the good planning and the helping hands of many volunteers this went so smoothly that we even had time for a beer before the caterer arrived!

Fabian's impressive sound system was also quick to set up and Basti's home beamer delivered fabulous pictures on the gym's wall. (The worries we might have too little luminosity and/or a too small screen and no real sound turned out to be baseless...).

Then, finally, when the buffet was ready, Master Bernd opened the evening event with its first agenda item: the demo battle. Three teams of participants competed.



And off we went with ... uhh, what? Little Red Riding Hood? That's what it looked like at first glance when Tilla jumped up to the stage in a red hooded cape and picked flowers in the woods while the sun was shining brightly. But then, oh no!, a grim and foul-tempered forest spirit appeared, which obviously had no sense for flowers and their beauty. One word led to the other, and the opponents faced each other in a staff fight. When the forest spirit refused to stop in spite of the first arse kick, Little Red Riding Hood had to shift up gears. The cape fell and Wonderwoman appeared.

Wonderwoman? Yes, WONDERWOMAN! I couldn't believe my eyes - what a twist. From now on it was obvious that the disgruntled troll would meet his maker. And so it came and Wonderwoman made it with only a little delay (hello, Speyer?) in time for dinner at Grandma's, who already rang her worriedly.

The laughter and the applause of the spectators had hardly subsided, when it went straight to the next demo: A man of advanced age with a walking stick and quite some love handles came along the way and took the opportunity to do relieve himself. Unfortunately, he did this in the yard of a farmer, who witnessed and directly confronted the leaker. Showing little insight, the fat gentleman with the walking stick became even more impudent and began to swing his cane threateningly. Fortunately, the farmer had his broom with him, but, oh dear, it broke in half at first contact. Not too bad, as the young farmer now had two weapons at hand to instruct the cheeky tinkler. After a wild back and forth with great comedy, Mr. Pee had to give in and pull away, not without some funny comments.



Again, there was lots of applause and laughter and the third demo started right away.

A (magic?) carpet was laid out and Aladdin (or was it Alibaba without the 40 thieves?) took a seat next to it to adore a magical and gracefully dancing genie in a bottle. Unfortunately, the admiration from afar wasn't enough for him and Aladdin started trying to grab, which Jeannie didn't like at all. Even using her scimitar could not stop the lecher. But once she started talking straight with the help of sticks and "fireballs", the grabber had to admit his defeat and put down next to the carpet.



Standing ovations for all three demo teams! Hilarious stories and great outfits, my deepest respect!



There was one more demo to come. Non-competitive and once the audience had filled out the ballots it was "clear the decks!" for us, the guys from Speyer. The story is quickly told: A caretaker who prefers to let others do the work watches a Rastafari who does the sweeping for him and witnesses how he is harassed by a rabble-rousing, extremely aggressive and armed to the teeth roughneck. This bully doesn't just have a whole arsenal of weapons (in a huge bag he brought along) with him, which the Rasta can

only oppose with his broom and bucket, he also doesn't want to give up and keeps on attacking over and over again. Just when the temporary sweeper thinks it's over, another attack is launched behind his back, which the janitor thankfully nips in the bud. To Bob Marley's "One Love" the two ponder about what they just experienced, finally feel sorry for the aggressor, help him to get back up on his feet and smoke the "pipe of peace". The end.

News flash: On November 29th 2018 the UNESCO declared Reggae as an Intangible Cultural Heritage and after their decision, they danced to "One Love". No kidding, such coincidences cannot be made up. They just happen. 😊

This fourth and last demo marked the start of the evening dinner. A feast, the choice of the caterer and the menus an absolute hit! During dinner the first pictures of the day (taken by Michael Hosch) could be seen on the gym's wall thanks to Basti's beamer.

Then came the award ceremony and as announced medals have been rewarded to each participant. The counting of votes resulted in an ultra tight head-to-head race. Completely justified, but in the end the trophy went to Wonderwoman and Wood Gnome. But that's not it yet. Bernd's big grin revealed that something was still to come. The present MONKS were called and there was another medal rewarded for the many years in which demos were shown. A wonderful gesture, thank you Bernd!

Then we continued food and drinks and there were even more pictures shown, also from past years and in between a few videos, which came into their own thanks to the combination of Basti's beamer and Fabian's sound system.

As the evening drew to a close, the gym was re-arranged back and swept through quicker than expected. Everyone would be able to get a good night's sleep to start the next day at 9am, sharp.

Day 2...

...should, just like last year, include six instructors who should convey their view of our Escrima. Unfortunately, Master Sascha was absent due to illness and after a short democratic vote it was agreed to simply stop one hour earlier. Said done, it went to work.

Starting with Master Falk's inimitable, reality satire way of illustrating the dangers and potential of the back of the blade, through Basti's early sporting dance interlude (better than any club holiday!), to Frank's calmer but very instructive explanations about distance, followed by Master Steffen's exercises and applications with stick and knife, which showed how dangerous this combination is, up to the last session, Christian's Escrima Parkour, or how some quickly renamed it "Nav's world of games".



Each session had its own focus, but in the end it turned out that everything belongs together, everything fits together in one system. And the best way to learn and practice is: with fun. Which we had. All of us.

Thank you Master Bernd and thank you to all co-instructors and participants. You made this symposium (again) an unforgettable experience.



Of course my thanks also go to a person, without whom all this would not exist, the inventor of this system as we know and love it today: GM Bill Newman. Thank you so much for this one system, this one love.

Christian „The Navigator“ Karpp