

## CAP I'LL WEAR IT

I'm feeling quite sore. Last night I Capoeirad. If you don't know what Capoeira is think of those blokes that are swinging their legs over each other in the BBC continuity bit. Or the mobile phone ad where they're on the beach. If you're still not sure, you might like to think of it as Acrobatic No Contact Karate Dancing Time.

I arrived to see a group of excited people waiting outside a dark community hall. Somehow it felt like the meeting of some dangerous underground society. I don't know how. Don't ask me. We got changed in what seemed to be a recently excavated 19<sup>th</sup> Century kitchen. T-shirt, tracksuit bottoms and bare feet. The ceramic floor was freezing and I moved quickly into the hall and it's wooden floor. The wooden floor was freezing.

We queued up and paid, 10 Euods for 1 class, 30 for 5. I just went for the one class. We'll see how it goes. Then I was just standing round the hall waiting for the rest to pay and getting nervous about what was going to happen next. I felt a little bit like a gladiator waiting for the battle. "Whatever comes through those gates, we'll stand a much better chance if we stick together." The experienced were warming up with some cartwheels. So cartwheels seemed to be something to do with it. Instead I looked at the backdrop for somebody's school play which was up on the stage. It appeared to be a town scene.

First came the warm up. Thick and fast. Running around the hall in a line. Now run sideways, now run backwards. Now spinning. Now cartwheeling. Now jingaing. Jingaing is kind of sweeping your foot behind you and going from foot to foot like this, and also swinging your arms in the opposite direction. It's the basic move of Capoeira. It's the stand-by move. From there comes all the exciting stuff.

The warm up went on for quiet some time. I was more worn out than warmed up by the end of it. Jumping, crouching, stretching. Extensive. I was also very dizzy. Now it was time to begin. We split up into classes, based on experience. In the beginners class we were put in rows. The instructor showed us a move and we practised it over and over. It's quite like line dancing or something. Step, step, crouch, kick. Then we paired up and did the moves together. I did one move and my partner did the corresponding one. I kick, he crouches.

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Towards the end the teacher started batting a tambourine and everyone crowded around. Uh, oh. This was it. They were going to expose me for the fraud I was. "What is the password for the house?" We stood around in a circle and the instructors started clapping and singing a song. And then everyone joined in. The words were something like La-la-la, but I still couldn't follow them. Then people started to combat each other in the centre. Combat each other with dance. Two at a time they'd jinga and kick and crouch and cartwheel at each other. If there was a winner I couldn't tell who it was. Impressive but actually a bit messier than I expected. When one kicked the other didn't always crouch. Thus spoiling the symmetry of the thing. My favourite bit was when someone joined a fight. By hand signals you could take over from somebody and face up to the person they had been battling. "Leave him to me, I'll take care of this guy. Hey buddy, why don't you pick on someone your own size? - Hah! Yeah, how do you like that? Not so tough now are you." Without actually hitting them of course. Or saying all that stuff. It was all done through cartwheels.

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Good fun. A good experience. But I'm not sure I'll go back. To be honest I was just doing it to pick up women and there's got to be an easier way than that surely. Next week, I'll try a still life class or something.

What's that? You wanted to know about the history of Capoeira? How did it get started? Where's it from? To be honest with you I couldn't be arsed. You can Google it as well as I could. Go look it up for yourself.

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