

Coda Lunga Guardia di Achille Marozzo

Gary Chelak (07/01, 02/02, revised 02/04)

Marozzo's Coda Lunga (long tail) series is comprised of three guards or positions, with one variant. Each are displayed and explained below. The defining characteristic of this series is that the sword is held to the right (outside) of the right knee. One may set the student in the first guard and transition him through the series. The student will end in the same guard in which he began. In doing so, remember a key tenet of Marozzo's teachings: to paraphrase, *Never defend without attacking, and never attack without defending*. This axiom exists in the sword blows & footwork that create each transition. The sword is both defense & offense; it makes a clearing action (generally with the falso filo/false edge) before the final position is reached. Each of these actions is a blow with the sword. As the transition is completed, the primary blow is struck.

Instructions are for right-handed artists - lefties please reverse directions to suit. Once these exercises are mastered with single sword, the left hand shall be armed with a buckler and the exercises repeated. Remember not to rush or lunge; this is largely a *dui-tempi* system that utilizes walking steps and a demi-lunge. Blade actions are made with a wheeling wrist motion, assisted by the elbow and sometimes the shoulder. The formation of these wards, their specific advantages, and transitional directions follow:



Coda Lunga e Stretta (1a): Long & Narrow Tail

Position: Weapon and weapon leg forward, weapon hand outside the right knee. Weapon arm is at roughly a 40/45 degree angle to the body, hand in the plane of the arm. Buckler is held forward in the left hand, upper edge coming to the top of the left pectoral muscle and allowing for ease of view over/around. Both arms should be slightly bent at elbow to facilitate fluid movement

Defense: Easily defensible as buckler is well forward and sword is readily available for counter-attacking actions.

Offense: *Mandritti*¹ with wrist or wrist & elbow via the *passo* (step) and the *gran passo* (great step/demi-lunge), respectively. *Roverso tondo* and *roverso squalembretto* are facilitated with an oblique step to the left. Thrusts are available, depth being footwork-dependent. Give ground at an oblique angle for best results.

Transition: Make a *passata* into *Coda Lunga e Alta* by retreating the right (forward) foot behind the left so as to mirror the previous footwork position. The wrist makes a *mandritto redoppio*, *falso filo*, with the sword by using a clockwise circle with the tip to initiate the action. Punching downward a little with the pommel at the end of the blow adds emphasis to the cut. You are now in the *Coda Lunga e Alta*.



Coda Lunga e Alta (1b): Long & High Tail

Position: Weapon and weapon leg retreated, buckler and left leg forward. Upper body has not changed from previous ward. The sword tip has raised a bit.

Defense: Primary. Buckler is advanced, blade is retreated.

Offense: Secondary. Attacks will take more time but can yield a decisive outcome. Mainly elbow/wrist *mandritti* & thrusts. *Roverso squalembretto* & *tondo* are available; achieved via the *gran passo* or *passata*. *Dritti roversi* & thrusts are good counters while defending an attack to your left flank.

Transition: Make a clockwise motion with the sword point & raise it (with the help of the shoulder) in the path of *mandritto redoppio*, with the *falso filo*.

Begin the passata forward as the sword point rises. Make a roverso squalebratto (dritto filo), completing the blow as the foot lands. You are now in the Coda Lunga e Larga.

*when adding the buckler, it must be turned a little to the left at the wrist to allow the sword to pass. This is common with the buckler and applies to the other transitions. If one is out of distance, the pommel may also be struck against the inside right of the buckler at the end of the initial blow to unsettle the opponent.



Coda Lunga e Larga (2) Long & Open Tail

Position: Same as Coda Lunga e Stretta, with the hand retreated almost to the hip & the sword point lowered toward the ground just in front of the enemy's forward foot.

Defense: Equal. Defensive qualities of Coda Lunga e Stretta apply, with more ready application of the Guardia di Fianco (guard of the flank) and Guardia de Intrare (entering guard).

Offense: Equal. Mandritti from the wrist using the falso filo are available, as are thrusts and the roverso squalebratto. These attacks in conjunction with a passo or a gran passo (in whatever direction necessary) will add to the damage while removing your body from danger.

Transition: Make a dritto redoppio, falso filo, while passing the right foot behind the left. Let the arm end with a little bend in the elbow, so the sword ends over the left shoulder (Guardia di Sopra il Braccio). Make a roverso squalebratto, dritto filo, while passing the left foot behind the right. Allow the arm to extend rearward at the end of the blow, and the hand to turn over as shown. Keep the hand to the right of the right knee. You are now in the Coda Lunga e Distesa.



Coda Lunga e Distesa (3) Long & Extended Tail

Position: Right leg and buckler forward, left leg and sword retreated; sword pointing behind at the ground so as to create a 'tail'. Sword continues to be outside the right side of the body, and the weapon hand in pronation or supination will yield deeper or more shallow attacks, respectively.

Defense: Secondary. Keep this position and move the feet as necessary.

Offense: Primary. The body is wound to deliver a blow. All attacks will likely be made via the gran passo, and colpi (cuts) will be mandritti. Thrusting is a ready option, by bending the elbow and quickly rotating the point forward with the hand. Should your opponent attack while you are in this ward (or transitioning through it), it will likely be deeply. Make a gran passo backwards

or traversing with the forward leg, cutting tondo or redoppio falso filo as you go. Follow with the high-line cut of your choice.

Transition: Make a dritto redoppio dritto filo with a slight slip backward of the forward foot, End with the sword hilt to the left of the face. Turn the hand over, momentarily passing almost into Guardia di Sopra il Braccio and deliver a roverso squalebratto dritto filo with a slight step forward. You find yourself once again in Coda Lunga e Stretta.

As is wont in Western combat arts, footwork, combined with judgement in timing, distance and plane of attack in a 360 degree environment is paramount. One may transition in and out of these guards as the situation requires. In truth, they are no more than familiar positions with known attributes. A skilled practitioner strings them together as needed to manipulate the play and emerge victorious. Exercises like this

are not unlike the katas of the Eastern arts. Both train familiarity, understanding, focus and discipline. Like Dall'Agocchie interpreting Marozzo and Agrippa simplifying similar systems, much of Marozzo's technique can find lineage in that of Fiore dei Liberi nearly a hundred and twenty years earlier. The weapons in vogue were a little different, but the principles remain true.

Ciao,
Gary.



Gary Chelak



Tattershall
School of Defense

¹For convenience, the following information is included to assist with any terminology questions:

Colpi: Blows (Cuts)

- Fendente: vertical, descending
- Squalebratto: oblique, descending
- Tondo: horizontal
- Redoppio: oblique, ascending
- Montante: vertical, ascending
- Dritto/i: (right) cuts from the right
ex: dritto tondo
- Rovverso/i: (reverse) cuts from the left
ex: roverso tondo
- Dritto filo: right/true edge
ex: dritto tondo dritto filo
- Falso filo: back/false edge
ex: dritto tondo falso filo
- Tramazone/Stramazone: fast cuts made with the wrist only, executed in the style outlined above.
ex: tramazone ala fendente

Generating The Three Blows

Colpi may be made from three parts of the body, each with their own benefits and penalties. Rarely is a cut clearly one or the other, but instead a combination of two so as to best suit the exact circumstances:

- Shoulder: slow; most damage
- Elbow: medium speed; medium damage
- Wrist: fast; least damage

Image credit:

Marozzo, Achille, *Opera Nova* (Modena, 1536), from a 1540 reprint dedicated to Count Guido Rangone [1485-1539].

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