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Riduna Rigoletto, the seven year old approved Westphalian stallion who is being trained for dressage by David Pincus at Sheepcote Stables, Bartestree, Hereford.

An illustrated article on David Pincus and his Dressage Training Centre at Sheepcote Stables appears in this issue.



SHEILA HOSKEN visits

DAVID PINCUS AND HIS DRESSAGE CENTRE

at Sheepcote Stables, Bartestree, Hereford

WHILE I was attending a lecture-demonstration — a Teach-in for horse and rider — given by David Pincus in Newmarket last year, I was made aware of the very positive attitude of this talented Instructor. Later, when I visited his Training Centre near Hereford, I watched him riding several horses and teaching pupils of varied experience, when it was clear that he loved his work and his own confident enthusiasm and lively style of teaching were an inspiration to horse and rider alike. With the emphasis on “precision”, “effectiveness” and “forward riding”, he brings the best of European instruction into the British riding school. His own extensive experience of European dressage was gained from years of training with some of the world’s leading riders and instructors in Germany, Austria, France and Switzerland.

David Pincus was born in Tel-Aviv and began to ride as a child in Israel under the instruction of a former colleague of Captain Edy Goldman. When he was about 18 years old, he had the good fortune to ride with Leopold Brustein, a former Russian cavalry officer and Certified Riding Master, who had been a pupil of James Fillis, the

celebrated British maestro of Haute Ecole who was Director of the Imperial Cavalry School in Russia. David says that it was from this that his interest in dressage was really initiated, although he doubts whether he appreciated the training and guidance he received from such a man then as much as he would now!

In 1971, he came to England when he was 22 years old, following three years’ service in the Israeli army as a paratrooper, and went to Crabbet Park where, one month later, he took and passed his B.H.S.A.I. examination. Following this, he went to work with an Irish dealer where he extended his experience by riding all types of horses and also had lessons from some of this country’s leading instructors including Robert Hall and Pat Manning, F.B.H.S. To widen his experience with horses, he worked at a stud in Newmarket for a year, where he gained valuable knowledge of racing and stud management. He also attended a month-long course at Wahrendorf in Germany and, in 1973, he passed his B.H.S.I.

After that, he went back to Germany and spent a month with Herr von Neindorf at Karlsruhe and he also went to Switzerland for further training and experience.

David's ambition was to train with the Spanish Riding School in Vienna and he applied to join them as one of the foreign riders whom they accept for training each year. However, Israeli rider, Danny Pevner, had been there only shortly before and another rider of the same nationality could not be accepted at that time. So, David took a job as instructor to a riding club on the outskirts of Vienna where he was able to have instruction from some of the riders from the Spanish Riding School during their free afternoons. He came to know several of them as personal friends and found he benefited greatly from the influence they had over him.

Spanish Riding School

Whilst the events that led to him ultimately being allowed to join the Spanish Riding School were almost a fairy-tale, it was his own ability as a rider and trainer of horses that won him the privilege. Two horses were sent to him for training and were seemingly classified as "unrideable" by their owner. They were to stay for two months but their arrival coincided with his departure for a six-week course with the Cadre Noir at Saumur in France. While he was away, the horses were lunged each day but he only had a very short time to school them himself on his return before he learned that the owner was coming to see how he was getting on. When the owner arrived, it was in company with Colonel Albrecht, the Director of the Spanish Riding School himself. Fortunately, such was the improvement that David had wrought in the two horses (even in the limited time that he had had at his disposal) that Colonel Albrecht was impressed and offered David a place at the Spanish Riding School. Thus, it was on his own merits that David won his coveted six months' course at Vienna.

At the end of the six months, he continued to have lessons from such eminent instructors as Ernst Bachinger, the Director of the school, and others while he was working in Austria for another year. He also attended another course at Karlsruhe and, later, went on a six-week course at the Westphalian State Riding and Driving School in Munster, under Herr Stecken.

Fate stepped into the life of David Pincus again at this stage when Herr

Stecken recommended him to the great dressage trainer and rider, Dr. Reiner Klimke, who was looking for someone to help work his young horses. He watched David ride and offered him the job. This was a rare situation and an exceptional opportunity which David was honoured to receive and delighted to accept. He spent nearly a year with Dr. Klimke during which time he was allowed to ride his competition horses and thus gained extensive and highly valuable experience in German dressage at its best and most profound. He also attended another course of five weeks' duration at Warendorf during this time.

Few riders in this country can match David's extensive experience in working with and competing on top class European dressage horses and it was a fortunate thing for British dressage that he declined the suggestion that he should stay longer in Germany, and returned to England to set up his own teaching establishment. After a few months spent near Cardiff where the essential facility of a covered school was not available to him, he was offered the use of the near-perfect situation of stables, a large indoor school and cross-country fences constructed over

The photograph on the opposite page shows David Pincus instructing two Event riders in the covered school at Sheepcote.

30 acres of land at Sheepcote, just outside the village of Bartestree, near Hereford, the home of Mrs. Leila Buckley.

Move to Sheepcote

Mrs. Buckley has a long association with horses and the indoor school was built some 15 years ago for the use of her family. With her children grown up, the school was little used and Mrs. Buckley was pleased that she was able to make it available to such an outstanding dressage rider, as she, herself, has a considerable interest in dressage. David, in turn, was delighted to be able to rent the premises from Mrs. Buckley and thus settle into this admirable location. He moved to Sheepcote Stables in November 1980, bringing with him some of the horses he had been working on in Cardiff.

David's principal objective has always been to produce top class dressage horses and the activities at his Training Centre are primarily aimed at schooling horses and riders for dressage. However, eventers and



David Pincus



One end of the indoor school with the judges' and steward's boxes in the centre. At the opposite end of the building, there are sliding doors corresponding to those shown in this photograph.

show jumpers are also catered for and several of the horses that David is training take part in unaffiliated show jumping as part of their training.

The Horses

Among the horses at Sheepcote Stables are four which David bought in Germany last year on behalf of two owners, Mrs. O'Gorman who lives on Alderney and Mr. and Mrs. John Ladbroke from South Wales. These people have shown their faith in David by giving him a free hand to choose suitable horses which, it is hoped, will make their mark in due course. Details of these horses will be included later in this article.

Currently, there are sixteen horses living in the stables with five full-time staff (who are experienced but are there on a working-pupil basis) to look after them. There is more stabling available for visiting horses

and for pupils' horses which they bring on short or long-term courses. The Centre caters chiefly for riders on their own horses but they are sometimes given one of David's to ride to help them to feel what it is like to ride one or more movements on a trained horse or one which will help them to see more clearly what they are aiming for. As his horses are of mixed ability and breed, some of them with problems to overcome, some from show jumping yards or straight off the hunting field, clients and working pupils have the opportunity to learn a great deal from watching David schooling them and from riding them themselves. At the time of writing this article, David charges £10 for a private lesson, £7 for a lesson shared with one other person and £4 for a class lesson when there are never more than four of his working pupils plus the visiting rider. He hopes he will not have to commercialise his Centre too

much and it is clear to anyone who knows him that his aim in life is not to make a lot of money but, as he says, "I want to see people trying, and hopefully succeeding, to get something worthwhile from their horses".

Sensitivity

German methods of equestrian training have been termed domineering and severe and they have been accused of working their horses in an "over-restricted" frame. The impression that I received from David and his horses was, on the contrary, one of partnership and sensitivity. He does not bully or dominate his horses but trains them along the lines of question and answer. Through a delicate sense of feel, a "conversation through the aids," he asks his horses for an improvement and he expects a reply. Constantly he is aware of how much he can ask at any one time, never over-stimulating them or prolonging an exercise until boredom creeps in. He is mentally alert to their intellectual and physical capabilities and never demands too much, always allowing ample time during training sessions for relaxation on a long rein.

Like a Puzzle

"In Germany," he says, "we are concerned with the equality of the response from the horse — his obedience and willingness to work with you. We use the aids to talk through to our horses and we are constantly feeling for a reply. We have to be 'thinking' riders — that means, interpreting the horse's response to the aids. It can be affected by so many different problems, stiffness in a muscle, misunderstanding, laziness, inattentiveness, tiredness or his general health. We concentrate each day on correcting and improving the whole horse by practising the appropriate exercises. Eventually, the exercises all fit together like a puzzle and we have the finished picture — at Advanced level. Before that, we have an incomplete horse at the Preliminary and Novice stage so we do not pay too much importance to showing him at that level. We see 'communication' not domination; we know and feel when the horse has had enough or is ready for more at any one training session."



A horse which is showing great promise in David's hands is *Nerina*, by the H.I.S. stallion, *Nerium* out of a Shire/Welsh Cob mare. She is an example of how Welsh Cob blood helps to produce the activity needed in a dressage horse.