

THE Iberian HORSE

DEDICATED TO THE SPANISH AND PORTUGUESE HORSE

ISSUE 2 | 2016

Ciro BR, 2009 Andalusian
Stallion of Spanish
Cross Ranch with
trainer Renee Phillips



A JOINT PUBLICATION OF
THE FOUNDATION FOR THE PURE SPANISH HORSE AND THE INTERNATIONAL ANDALUSIAN AND LUSITANO HORSE ASSOCIATION



The Royal Andalus **EQUE**



(PICTURED)

Traditional riders outside the Royal School's iconic indoor arena.

Andalusian School of STRIAN ART

By Diane E. Barber

Photographs by Diane E. Barber and the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art

THE CITY OF JEREZ DE LA FRONTERA ON THE IBERIAN PENINSULA IN SOUTHERN SPAIN IS GLOBALLY RENOWNED NOT ONLY AS THE SHERRY AND FLAMENCO CAPITAL OF THE WORLD, but also for the prestigious Fundación Andaluza Real Escuela del Arte Equestre (Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art) and some of the finest horses in the world.

Steeped in aristocratic history and tradition, the Royal School is dedicated to the preservation and promotion of purebred Spanish horses (Pura Raza Españolas or P.R.E.s) and classical and country-style dressage. The school was conceived in 1973 when Don Alvaro Domecq Romero of the esteemed Domecq sherry-producing family was recognized for his significant contributions to the horse world and was awarded the Caballo de Oro (Golden Horse) trophy by Prince Juan Carlos (later the King of Spain) – the highest equestrian honor in the country. In celebration of the prestigious award, Domecq presented a dressage show with 15 horses and riders choreographed to Spanish music called “Como Bailan los Caballos Andaluces” (“How the Andalusian Horses Dance”) – the first of many performances that would span decades.

The tourism ministry of Andalusia eventually assumed management of Domecq’s school and show and built an indoor arena with seating for 1,600 spectators and stables for 60 horses on a former palatial private estate named Recreo de las Cadenas. In 1982, the ownership and management changed hands to a municipal governing body headed by the province of Cadiz. One year later, the government of Andalucía took the helm and appointed Domecq as the technical director. The acquisition of a stable of 35 Spanish horses, a collection of 19 horse-drawn carriages, harnesses, tack and coachmen costumes from another Domecq family member (Don Pedro Domecq de la Riva) was instrumental in the future

success of the school. Other key milestones included King Juan Carlos I lending official royalty to the name “Royal School” when he accepted the position of Honorary President in 1987 (still held by the King today) and the school’s recognition as a foundation in 2003, thus allowing private funding.

Today, while still managed by the Andalusian government, the Royal School is famous worldwide for its year-round performances of “How the Andalusian Horses Dance,” which have delighted international audiences for more than 40 years. Riders and horses adorned in 18th century-style costumes perform what is lauded as an equestrian ballet choreographed to classical music written and composed expressly for the production. The captivating and technically difficult performances are simply titled “Pas de Deux,” “Passage and Piaffe,” “Airs above the Ground,” “Airs on Horseback” and a solo performance called “Fantasy,” among others. A salute to Spanish heritage complements the classical dressage program with a performance of doma vaquera (country dressage or Spanish cowboy) – the riding style that has been used for hundreds of years on working cattle ranches. Rounding out the rich celebration of horsemanship is a high-energy enganches (carriage driving) presentation and a group grand finale performed in unison called “Carousel.”

Though the show is the most publicized highlight of the Royal School, horse and rider haute école (high school) dressage training, education and international competition are also cornerstones of the prestigious foundation. Four-year specialty courses in horsemanship, carriage driving, and saddle and harness making are offered, as well as training for stable and clinical assistants. Additionally, two-week advanced intensive training courses (practical and classroom) for selected amateur and professional riders are taught

(RIGHT)

The Palace at the Royal School and the indoor arena and coliseum.



by the school's expert instructors with the performance horses. Outside of the school, some of the riders and horses compete in national and international equestrian competitions. Their most notable accomplishments are the dressage team silver medal won by Rafael Soto/Invasor and Ignacio Rambla/Oleaje at the 2004 Olympic Games in Athens and a team bronze medal at the 2002 World Equestrian Games in Jerez (Rafael Soto/Invasor and Ignacio Rambla/Granadero). Spanish championships were also won annually from 1994-1999 and again in the years 2000 and 2004. Riders and horses also serve as ambassadors to Andalusia and Spain during annual travels abroad to perform "How the Andalusian Horses Dance."

The horses

There is archeological evidence that the ancestors of Spanish horses inhabited the Iberian Peninsula more than 3,000 years ago. However, the origin of the noble P.R.E. breed that stars in "How the Andalusian Horses Dance" dates back to 1567 and the reign of King Philip II. In his personal quest to create a Spanish horse in the ideal image found in centuries-old mythology, folklore and art, he ordered the royal horse master in the city

(BELOW)
Carriage at the Royal School.



... The Royal School is famous worldwide for its year-round performances of 'How the Andalusian Horses Dance,' which has delighted international audiences for more than 40 years.

(BELOW)

Exhibition performance: "How the Spanish Horses Dance"

of Córdoba to acquire numerous Spanish mares and stallions throughout Andalusia for selective breeding.

The king's grand undertaking to improve the Andalusian horse was heralded a tremendous success. In the words of François Robichon de la Guernière, the late dressage master of that era and one of the most influential writers on the art of dressage, "All writers have always given preference to the Spanish horse and considered it to be the best of all horses for the arena due to its agility, resourcefulness and natural rhythm. It has been esteemed the most appropriate for the arena, for displays and parades, for its poise, grace and nobility; and even more suitable for war on a day of action, both for its great spirit and docility. The Spanish horse is the most fitting to be mounted by a king on occasions of triumph." The most defining characteristics of P.R.E.s are their regal conformation, energetic yet docile temperament, willingness, resilience, a natural predisposition for collection, exceptional extensions and elevations, and great aptitude for haute école dressage and airs above the ground. The breed was so revered by royalty that for centuries they were depicted in portraits of European kings and were the most highly sought-after horses in all of Europe. In keeping with the tradition of the association of Spanish horses and kings, a special seating box for the King of Spain and royal guests stands watch at the end of the indoor arena over the school's herd during practice, training and performances.



A tour of the Royal School

The Royal School of Equestrian Art is in the heart of the city of Jerez, bordered by bustling city streets. Beyond the curbside gatehouses (now ticket offices) on Avenida Duque de Abrantes, the iron main gate opens through the stone wall to the expansive grounds of Recreo de las Cadenas.

The newly built reception area welcomes visitors with coffee and gift shops and an audio/video theater presentation of the history of Andalusian equestrian art.

In keeping with the school's air of perfection, historical trees and impeccable botanical gardens draw guests from the reception area to a grand fountain at the center of the property to the stately 19th century palace, which was originally a family residence for a prominent vintner named Don Julian Premartin Laborde. During a thriving economy and at the peak of the boom of sherry houses in

Jerez, Premartin commissioned French architect Charles Ganier (famous for designing the Paris Opera House and the Monte Carlo Casino) to design the palace in a leisurely park-like setting at his personal estate and extension of his sherry business. Upon completion in 1864, His Highness Francisco Maria de Asis (husband to the Queen of Spain at the time) attended the inauguration and approved the distinction of placing chains at the main entry, hence the name "Recreo de las Cadenas" (recreation chains). Much of the original Louis XV French-style interior design has been preserved, though the noble rooms that were once used for a lavish lifestyle and to entertain aristocrats now are used for meetings, receptions, exhibitions, and advertising and movie locations.

The Equestrian Art Museum located in the basement of the palace pays reverence to the centuries-old human/equine bond and the cultural



Lesley Rand Bennett hand crafts
The Joan of Arc Jewelry Collection
in 14k gold

*"I am not afraid.
I was born to do this."
-Joan of Arc*

Bennett Fine Jewelry
*Exclusive Equestrian & Traditional Jewelry
Scottsdale, Arizona*

ALL DESIGNS ©
LESLEY RAND BENNETT

www.bennettfinejewelry.com (480) 585-3080

significance of horses in Spain. It provides visitors with an interactive educational experience about the origin and evolution of the Spanish horse and the equestrian arts. Highlighted themes of the tour include mythical horses, the history of equestrian art in the world, the history of the Royal School, haute école dressage, equestrian professions and world championship equestrian events. Located in the palace directly above the museum is the Equestrian Documentation Center, which is a resource and research center created in 2008. The vast collection of books and documents provide extensive information about Andalusian equestrian art and Spanish horses.

(BELOW)

Rafael Soto, Olympian and head of riding at the school, masterfully performs *doma vaquera* (Spanish cowboy dressage), used for centuries on cattle ranches in Spain.

(RIGHT)

The circular, two-level tack room in the center of the main stables at the Royal School inspires awe.

Steps down a columned staircase at the back of the palace lead to the school's outdoor arena, which is used for training and special performances. The quaint brick building perched at the far end of the arena is the Royal School's saddlery where the master harness maker and his apprentices preserve the age-old art of Spanish saddle and harness making. So meticulous is the master that his students must first draw every piece of tack with perfection before receiving approval to press cutting tools into leather.

A short walk adjacent to the palace is the outdoor exercise ring and the iconic indoor riding arena where "How the Andalusian Horses Dance" is performed. The deep yellow and brilliant white structure is typical of Andalusian







(ABOVE)

The "Carousel" presentation features horses and riders performing choreographed *haute école* dressage.

(BELOW)

Exhibition performance

architectural design. Numerous distinct round windows provide natural light for daily training and weekly performances, which are in keeping with the staunch environmental sustainability policies of the foundation. Through the patriotic flag-adorned arches at the end of the arena opposite the King's throne is the immaculate two-level tack room in the middle of a round stone floor passageway. Extending from the circular center are five stables, with 12 exquisite stalls each, named after some of the most significant horses in the history of the school including four of the 15 founding horses – Jerezano, Valeroso, Garboso, Vendaval and Ruisenor. The in-house, state-of-the-art veterinarian clinic is next to the stables and is fully staffed with a team of specialists who provide all of the medical care for the Royal School's horses. It includes an operating theater equipped for abdominal and bone surgery, a laboratory for general and biochemical analysis, image diagnostics, a pharmacy, intensive care unit, a reproduction laboratory and frozen semen bank and other features.

To honor and preserve the tradition of horse-drawn carriages, the Carriage Museum opened in 2002



across the street from the stables in a 19th century winery that was owned by the Laborde family. Twelve of the original carriages and harnesses donated by the Domecq family are on display in the main room of the museum and are equipped with interactive touch screens for visitors to access information about the origin and history of each carriage. Even more interesting than the use of educational modern technology with antiquities is that it is a living museum. Under the same roof with the collectible carriages, harnesses and costumes are stabled horses. Guests can watch grooms care for them, clean tack and polish the carriages for a more in-depth equine experience.

Viva España

World-class riders and Andalusian horses, the art of Spanish horsemanship, architectural perfection, historical tradition, cultural pride, environmental stewardship, passion and warm Spanish

hospitality converge to create the sophisticated elegance that is the Royal Andalusian School of Equestrian Art. Whether an amateur or professional equestrian of any discipline or simply a horse admirer, those who have the privilege to visit the Royal School and experience "How the Andalusian Horses Dance" undoubtedly leave with cherished lifelong memories. For more information, visit these websites: www.realescuela.org, www.andalucia.com, www.cadizturismo.com. ♦TIB

This article was first printed in the August 2015 issue of Dressage Today (dressagetoday.com).

Diane Barber lives in Los Angeles and is a lifestyle writer, interior designer and equestrian with an affinity for Spain. Her horse's Spanish lineage (his Arabian grand-sire, Sidi Brahim, was Spain's 1976 gold medal Horse of the Year) led her to Andalusia and to the Royal School, where she has trained under the tutelage of Rafael Soto.



STUNNING STEEDS
Photography • Video • Marketing

Office: **877-51-HORSE**
(4 6 7 7 3)

- Photography
- Video
- Ad Design
- Magazine Design
- Postcards/Stallion Cards
- Logo Design
- Web Design
- Email Blasts
- Vinyl Banners
- Posters
- Brochures

STUNNINGSTEEDS.COM