

BACK TO THE FUTURE

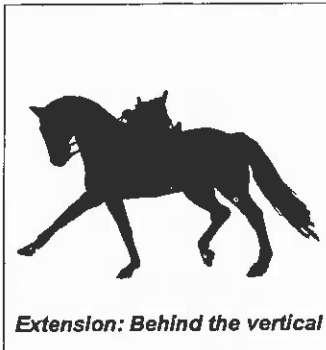
Reiter Revue International made the effort to produce the shadow box pictures seen below from photographs taken at horse shows. These pictures showing a number of faulty movements are not of amateur riders but of internationally known top riders.

The equestrian sport is booming, media and sponsors enter the business around the horse in increasing numbers. Everything is developing and changing. Not always for the best, Georges Theodorescu thinks. He is an international dressage trainer and a former Grand Prix rider himself. The father and trainer of the Olympic team medal winner Monica Theodorescu gave an interview to Reiter Revue International with critical thoughts about dressage going through a change.

Today you hear again and again of new methods. The question arises where does that lead to. What can be so new in dressage riding and training? The horses remained the same over the last few centuries, even if the quality has improved through selective breeding. But there are training principles that do not change. The forehead of the horse weighs about 80 kg more than the haunches – today as well as in former times. Does one not have to pay the same amount of attention to balancing the horse during all

training today?
 Today in horse shows you see more and more horses that are worked from front to back. They kick mightily in front, haunches dragging, tight in the back, and are behind the vertical. Riders are presenting them sometimes faster or slower but rarely in true collection. And the walk, the most important gait after all, is rarely subtle and marching, but instead the horses move mechanically. Unfortunately, such performances are often rewarded with high scores – to the great surprise of the expert. Should judges, riders, and trainers not orient themselves anew – or better, remember the old general principles?

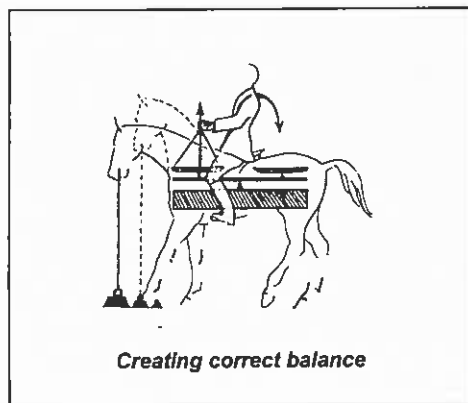
Is it not a fact that the haunches are better



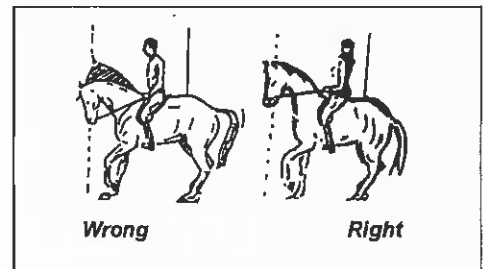
Extension: Behind the vertical



Piaffe: Tight, out in the back

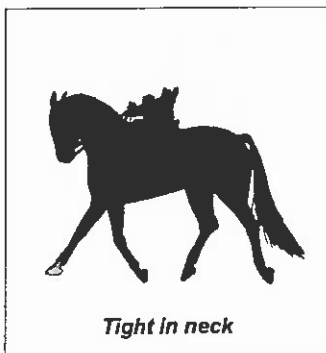


Creating correct balance

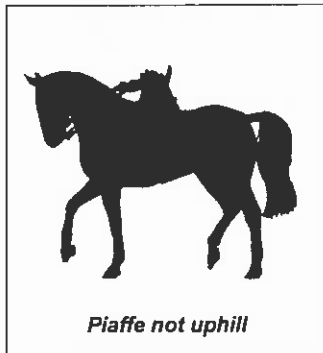


Wrong

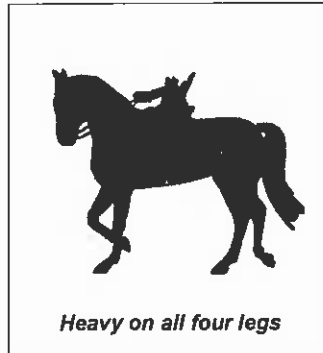
Right



Tight in neck



Piaffe not uphill



Heavy on all four legs

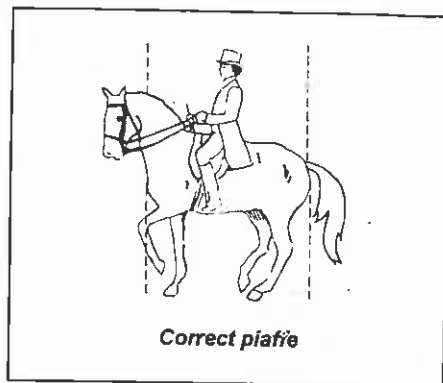


High in croup

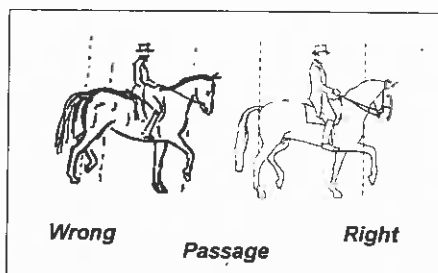
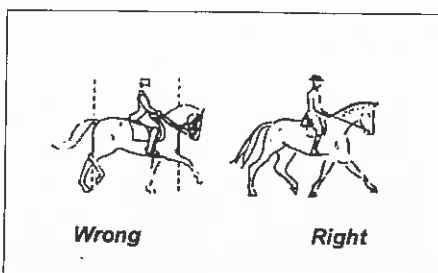
equipped with "springs" than the forehead? The shock absorption of the haunches is there to carry the weight. When the shock absorbing haunches compress, while carrying the weight, the forehead stretches up, because the weight is taken off. This is visible for instance during a jump or in the elevated steps of piaffe and passage.

The terms *Hankenbug* (bend hocks) and *Unter-den-Schwerpunkt-treten* (stepping into the point of gravity) describe this principle that gets more and more lost. Felix Bürkner once said: "This basic principle lies in the systematic gymnastic development of the haunches to prepare for

trainers and riders, once said: "The basics of the well-trained dressage horse are a result of the principles of riding set forth in Regulations that remain valid for all times. Abandoning these century-old experiences causes devastating results. The demand that correct dressage training enhances the beauty of the horse is directly linked to the principle that even a Fourth Level (or even FEI Level) horse can resume the frame and subtleness of a Training Level horse at any time. Only this principle prevents the rider from creating tension when working on highest collection. If a Fourth Level (or even FEI Level) horse can represent a Training Level horse at any time, he knows



to these principles with high scores, we have to ask ourselves if those principles are still valid or if they need to be changed. However, if the mentioned principles are still valid, why does one not work accordingly? Not only trainers and riders but mainly judges determine the course of dressage through their scores. They should always be aware of this fact, whether they judge Grand Prix or Training Level. However, if a spectacular but tensely and tightly moving horse already gets higher marks in a Suitability Test than the subtle, correctly ridden horse, it is not surprising that more and more riders take the wrong course in the training of their horses.



collection." Is this statement not true any more? I do not believe so.

I still believe that collection is mainly achieved through half-halts and full halts. This principle is found not only in the "FEI Reglement Internationale" (Par. 416) but also in all classical riding manuals that are based on centuries-long experiences. Müseler, for instance, wrote: "All half-halts are given in the same way, by riding the horse from the back to a non-allowing hand!" What holds for collection is also true for extension. The haunches have to step into the point of gravity as well. Lengthening the frame yes, but forward, not backwards.

Felix Bürkner, one of the truly great

the correct basics. Those correct basics, however, are only visible to judges who know in depth about correct training and can look beyond what is shown to them. A judge should not degrade to a registrar of formal mistakes, but help the honest, correctly trained horse to succeed. Otherwise he hurts the essence of our art of riding and discourages all newcomers from riding dressage. The dressage competitor on the other hand has to be able to trust the knowledge of the judges, and the judge has to help the beginner riders through his comments to aim for the correct way of riding and adhere to the proper basics."

If today there are judges who award rides and movements which do not adhere

To our readers!

If you would like comment on this topic as a judge, competitor, or trainer, please write to *DRESSAGE & CT*, 1772 Middlehurst Road, Cleveland Heights, OH 44118-1648.

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