

Ancient breed makes a great partner for modern disciplines.

by Susanne Desai for the Lipizzan Association of North America

For years I dreamed of what kind of horse I would get after my beloved Arabian of 36 years finally passed away. I could have purchased a well-trained Warmblood or a valiant Thoroughbred off the track here in Del Mar, but I decided to get a Lipizzan after finding him online.



He was very well priced at only \$2,000 and I knew I had the foundation to make something out of a young horse with no experience.

Growing up in the Midwest in the 1980s, I was used to many breeds of horses and got to see Lipizzans compete at Temple Farms under my trainers Tom Poulin, Curtis Sage and Sandi Chohany. To me, the ancient noble breed is what dressage should be.

Since being bred for the last 450 years, the Lipizzan is the oldest breed in Europe. Here in the U.S., we have very few breeders but they choose to breed to maintain the bloodlines and meet strict guidelines passed down to us from the Austrian Stud Farm Piber. The Spanish Riding school in Vienna is the oldest riding school in Europe and it started as a government program and is now a private institution. You can buy memorabilia and even sponsor a horse at www.srs.at/en.

August 2016 - Riding a Fantasy Lipizzan

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If you want to buy your own horse look at www.Lipizzan.org for a list of breeders in North America. You can also join the organization and have access to online records of the breed and the efforts of the oldest Lipizzan group for all of North America.

My horse, Pluto Fantasia, is named by his sire line, Pluto, and his mare line, Fantasia. He came to me in 2009 as a 5 year old stallion. He has been a fantasy to work with and now that we have started him correctly for classical dressage he is well versed in groundwork and lunging and is working on a correct working trot. Working trot does not just reflect his speed but, in dressage, it means he is “working” over his back.

Using his back to lift his core up and round, he is able to use all of his joints correctly. Once he picks up his back, he floats and anything is possible. Being a horse that has come from many generations of “above ground airs” he likes to take flight. Those acrobatic flights are called “haute ecole” and they are easier for the Lipizzan breed because their conformation lends itself to the ultimate balance under saddle with a broad base and large leg joints and a wide barrel.

Many adult men ride this breed and they take up your leg easily and take off into warp speed like a spaceship on TV. But taking off and doing a “levade” or attempting a “courbette” are only moves that he tries during turnout and occasionally on the lunge line. That is because he has developed a very strong relationship with his rider. Often times we use voice commands and he literally can read minds. His intelligence is there and very apparent, because of his heritage he has been bred to have it. Only the best horses are bred and only for the right characteristics.

Each horse is meant to be just like its predecessors and when they are young the horses at the SRS are often led to watch the older horses and they then learn from watching the older horses how to perform movements. So the trainers on the ground need only make small corrections to teach what is already a natural behavior.

If you are looking to ride a fantasy horse and you want to make your dreams come true, look into Lipizzans.