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The Dancing Stallions of Lipizza - Part

I

Lead: The graceful and elegant stallions of Vienna's Spanish Riding School have a long and fascinating history.

Intro.: *A Moment in Time* with Dan Roberts.

Content: It is hard for those living in the late twentieth century to imagine a time in which motorized transport was nonexistent and the horse in its various breeds was the indispensable provider of locomotion and carriage for goods and people.

Today, expensive to maintain and relatively rare, the horse has largely become a diversion and source of entertainment for the well-to-do. There was a time, however, when one had a horse or walked, when goods were mostly conveyed by horse power or by humans, when the fate of nations was decided by the quality of horse bred and fought in their service.

In the rocky and steep hills of northeastern Italy the tiny village of Lipizza is the ancestral home for an amazing breed that is today a vivid reminder of the importance of the horse in commerce, transportation and warfare. In 1580 Archduke Charles II of Austria established a stud, a breeding estate, in Lipizza. Using

selective breeding methods, Charles and his successors bred the foundation stock which provided mounts for the Hapsburg royal family and the court riding school.

The Lipizzaner breed is a genetic mix. It is descended from four distinct lines and bears some of the best characteristics of each. To the sturdy Karst horse native to the region around Lipizza was bred more refined and swift Spanish horses of Arabian ancestry. To these were added the heavy and tall Neapolitan horses bred in central Italy around Naples.

The result was a large, thick and tall horse with exceptional intelligence and strength. The best of the breed

were reserved for royal use and of them the nearly pure white were especially prized. They were housed in Vienna at Spanish Riding School a part of the royal palace. Only military officers and nobility were allowed to train there. They learned a complicated series of maneuvers originally designed as cavalry techniques used to strike fear in the heart of enemy soldiers. Next time: Lipizzaner stallions set at risk.

At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.

Resources

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