

GRANDMASTERS AND THEIR RIDING ACADEMIES

This Mastery Manual is about the history of the art of riding in Europe. For centuries, people all around the world have been fascinated by horses and the art of riding thus has a long history.

2000 B.C. – 500 A.D.: ANTIQUITY

Around 2000 B.C., the first ridden horses appeared. For centuries, horses have been used as war horses, and the rider, or knight, or king, or monarch, always had to have one hand free to be able to fight. Harmony between the horse and its rider was very important and the horse had to be very maneuverable, flexible and obedient.

Around 400 B.C., Xenophon reported an important discovery; he said that one could only go to war and fight with a maneuverable horse. Xenophon was the son of a rich Greek from Athens and a pupil of the philosopher Socrates. He fought as a mounted soldier within the Greek cavalry during many battles and wrote, among others, the book "On Horsemanship". His work is considered to be the first treaty on riding and horsemanship in the world. Xenophon is also considered to be the first of the old riding masters.

Because the riders of the Greek cavalry had their hands full of sword and shield, the horses had to react very quickly on the small commands. Only when the horse was obedient, flexible and fast, the rider could survive a battle. Therefore, the horse had to master complicated maneuvers.

Xenophon's book focuses especially on controlling the horse during fights. A typical war maneuver consisted of a fast canter with lots of impulsion during which the horse would suddenly be put back on the hindquarters to perform an 180° turn. Xenophon advised gymnastic exercises for each horse like the lateral movements and pirouettes.

Xenophon also believed in rewarding the horse. He said: "The sweetest of all sounds is praise." He also said never to lose your self-control when handling a horse: "For what the horse does under compulsion, is done without understanding; and there is no beauty in it either, any more than if one should whip and spur a dancer", and: "Anything forced or misunderstood, can never be beautiful."

500 – 1500: MIDDLE AGES

The Middle Ages were above all the time of the riding culture of the knighthoods. Riding masters from the Middle Ages are not known because every knight educated his own horse. There are many famous knights with evenly famous steeds. The right man at the right place at the right time always makes history; and Charles the Great was such a man.

About 800 A.D., the monarchs would fight at the battlefield with their knights.

To become a knight, one had to be the son of a knight or be of noble birth, be very rich or own lots of land. One had to start as early as possible with the education. As a seven-year-old, the boy would start as a page; he helped the cook, served the food and learned courtesy from the lady of the knight. At fourteen, the boy became squire; he took care of the knight's horse and cleaned the knight's weapons and armour, and he was allowed to come to the battlefield. The first test of a squire was to choose the right horse out of a group of stallions. He had to make the right choice; if he did not choose the right horse (most important was that there was mental connection between knight and horse), he would already have failed his first test on the road to knighthood.

A good knight's horse was very loyal to its knight and reacted with dedication on the smallest aid. A carefully trained horse would, at that time, reach the age of 30 and the knight would on average become somewhat older than 40 years. Horse and rider would thus work together for their entire lives.

Of course, there was not always war, so tournaments were organized; these were meant for the knights to exercise and to show one another one's capacities.

RENAISSANCE

At the time of the Renaissance, many ideas, forms of art and sciences arose and so did the art of riding. The writings of Xenophon became, after 2000 years, current again. The education of horse and rider at that time still had practical aspects to it. Horses were still used during wars, kings were riding ahead of their troops, and the obedience and flexibility of the horse were of vital importance to survive and be successful in battle.

In 1532, Frederico Grisone founded a riding academy in Naples. Grisone studied the works of Xenophon and wrote a rather violent book about the art of riding. Lightness was a good aspiration but if it did not work out, using a burning torch or a scratching cat were real remedies according to Grisone. He used long spurs till bleeding and with the whip, one would hit sensitive spots and between the horse's ears. The horse was really tortured during the training. Grisone's pupil Giovanni Pignatelli did not handle horses softly either.

Grisone worked a lot with geometrical figures; according to him, it was only through these figures that one could achieve true obedience from the horse.

Grisone founded the first academy, which made it possible to teach hundreds of riders. In this way, the cavalry could expand considerably. In whole Europe, riding academies were founded. Besides horse riding, one was also taught fencing, music, dancing, general and artistic courses. These riding academies regularly grew to become universities. Grisone became so popular that many kings in Europe chose him as their teacher.

1555 – 1620 ANTOINE DE PLUVINEL

Antoine de Pluvinel was a student of Pignatelli, as was Salomon de La Broue (circa 1530 – circa 1610), another French 'écuyer' and riding master. They were the founders of the old French 'haute école'. Salomon de La Broue was de 'Grande Écurie du Roi' in the reign of the King of France Henri IV, and Pluvinel of his son and successor Louis XIII.

Thanks to Pluvinel and de La Broue, certain brutal methods of the Italian school were stopped. Unlike their Italian masters, Pluvinel and de la Broue avoided violent methods and rejected the use of force or constraint in training, to obtain the best results from the horse. They used praise, gentle handling, careful use of tools, discrete aids, together with the suppling of the horse by using gymnastic exercises.

Pluvinel founded his riding academy in 1594 and was the tutor of the French King Louis XIII. He wrote the book "L'Instruction du Roy en l'exercice de monter à cheval" ("Instruction of the King in the art of riding"). Pluvinel wrote in his book about the natural asymmetry of the horse and how to correct it, and that the circle is one of the most difficult exercises for a horse because of his natural bend to one side. Also, exercises with weapons had a high priority within the education of horse and rider because of the need to be able to fight.

Pluvinel believed that humans first had to understand the horse before the horse could understand humans. He stated that each horse has his own characteristics, flaws and qualities, or in other words: a personality. His main concern was the well-being of the horse and that horses should be approached with feeling and softness.

1592 – 1676 DUKE OF NEWCASTLE

William Cavendish, the Duke of Newcastle, was a riding master from England and he also wrote books about the education of horses.

His text is often in contradiction with the pictures. He advises to use the horse as naturally as possible, but on the pictures, one often sees the rider using different ropes to shape the horse in a certain posture. His books were well received, but a lot of damage was subsequently caused to horses because of the misuse of the ropes. However, Steinbrecht as well as Guérinière, more recent riding masters, are full of praise for several aspects of the Duke of Newcastle's book and they are referring to him in their own books.

William Cavendish studied at the Riding academy of Pluvinel, he spent 15 years in Antwerp and he was a teacher at a riding school. After that, he went back to England and got the title of Duke of Newcastle.

UP TO 1600: HORSE RIDING WITH A PURPOSE – THE WAR HORSE

Up to 1600, horse riding had a very clear purpose. At that time, harmony between horse and rider was crucial and having a maneuverable, flexible and obedient horse was vital. If a horse ran wild and entered hostile territory, the rider had to pay this with his life. That is why horses were carefully and well trained in order to be strong and obedient and carry their knight, king or monarch during wars, duels, fights, and campaigns.

1600 – 1789: HORSE RIDING FREED FROM ITS PURPOSE – L'ART POUR L'ART

In the 17th century, the monarchs disappeared from the battlefield and the art of riding became a form of art – "l'art pour l'art". Because everyone was a rider in daily life or was living with horses (for traveling and hunting), the correct principles of training were still used. So dressage led to well-schooled, maneuverable and collected horses which could perform the most difficult exercises with elegance.

At that time, the horse did not have to be educated as a war horse, and horse riding was thus freed from its goal. The Baroque period with all its forms of art began, and the art of riding became true art.

1687 – 1751: FRANÇOIS ROBICHON DE LA GUÉRINIÈRE

Guérinière is the most important riding master from the Baroque period. He is considered to be a genius of the art of riding and he outshined his predecessors in many areas. Guérinière also was a believer in the non-violent training method based on partnership.

Guérinière was the first to use a complete and methodical structure in his book, with a complete description and classification of natural and artificial gaits and exercises to supple the horse and to develop him symmetrically. His work is still at the base of many publications on the art of riding and is the basis for all developments within the art of riding.

The Duke of Newcastle had invented the shoulder-in on the circle; Guérinière took this exercise on a straight line, an important step for the art of riding. The shoulder-in proved to be the most important key for true art of riding. It is also known as the "king/queen/mother of all exercises" and it's one of the most important exercises to counteract the natural asymmetry of the horse.

IBERIAN RIDING TRADITION

Riding master Dom Pedro de Alcântara e Meneses, the marquis of Marialva, is called the Guérinière of the Iberian peninsula. Manuel Carlos de Andrade (1755-1817) was a student of the marquis of Marialva. The work of Andrade is the only written testimony of the instruction of the famous riding master, whose influence reached Spain, Portugal and South America. This work is the most important one for the Portuguese riding school. The education method is based on psychological finesse, gentleness and the understanding of the horse's nature. The book is the most important work of the Iberian tradition of riding, and it contains many lessons and figures worked out in detail.

1789: FRENCH REVOLUTION – FROM QUALITY TO QUANTITY

With the French revolution and Napoleon's wars, the art of riding disappeared in France and all the resources were used for war. The quality of horse and rider didn't count anymore. It was about quantity: the more horses, the more riders, the more chance of survival. The riding schools of the royal courts disappeared and cavalry schools were founded, such as the Cadre Noir. The Spanish riding school in Vienna was the only royal riding school left.

The growing use of gunpowder brought changes in the way of fighting. Speed was more important than high school jumps and the modern cavalry arose. The cavalry schools educated recruits, mainly sons of civilians and farmers; professional soldiers were not used anymore. So, high school exercises such as the capriole or the terre-à-terre disappeared. This also led to the disappearance of the art of riding, since perfectly schooled riders and horses could be shot dead easily with a cannon. And there were no one-on-one fights anymore, but large troops would ride to the battlefield and meet the cannons.

The riding education of the recruits had to be completed in a relatively short period. Often, the riding ability consisted of not falling off the horse. Not much was expected from the recruits. New ways to shorten the education time of the recruits had to be found and so another art of riding arose. At that time, the rising trot was invented, because a beginner rider has difficulty to sit the trot.

The classical riding horse with its talent to bend the hind legs and carry weight on the hindquarters got redundant. One desired forward going horses, so the Iberian horses gave room to the English Thoroughbreds, Arabian horses and Trakehners; the push and thrust of the hind legs was born.

Officers were always riding ahead, and these officers wanted to ride with collection. So the officers became the heirs of the European riding culture after the disappearance of the royal riding schools.

19TH CENTURY: MILITARY RIDING ACADEMIES

Gustav Steinbrecht (1808–1885) and François Baucher (1796–1873) are two big names of the 19th century. Both men had the following problem: the highly schooled Iberian horses of earlier times were gone because of the Napoleonic period and the French revolution. However, the desire for collection remained. The modern riding horse, the English Thoroughbreds and the warmbloods derived from it, had more push and thrust. Therefore, Baucher and Steinbrecht had the same goal: both wanted to find ways to use the pushing ability of the hind legs and, despite it, obtain collection.

Baucher began by thoroughly studying the anatomy of the English Thoroughbreds and warmblood horses. He discovered that these horses were of different stature than the Iberian horses: their bodies and members were longer, and the head and neck were held differently. These horses had a pushing hindquarter with wide-angled joints and the power to carry was less. These horses were also less apt to bend in the loins.

Baroque horses can perform exercises with a deep bending of the loins, combined with a lowered croup and a body with an upwards slope. This could not be done with Thoroughbreds and warmbloods because of the different stature.

Baucher tried to collect the horse without lowering the hindquarters; he also made the horses do bending exercises to stretch the muscles of the back and neck and to get the horse to find its balance. Baucher put balance before motion.

Baucher was not only known in the riding schools, but also in the circus. He trained horses in such a way that they could canter backwards and do the Spanish trot. Baucher also discovered the flying change every stride. He wanted to present his horses at the circus as soon as possible; he taught a Thoroughbred the high school exercises in only four weeks. His training was perhaps more mechanical than the slow and systematic work of Guérinière; that is why Baucher has been and is criticised.

The indications of Baucher about the rider's seat were exemplary; he did not only think of the importance of gymnastics for the horse, but also for the rider.

Steinbrecht was confronted with the same problem. The cavalry was using English Thoroughbreds and warmbloods that had to be very fast with their powerful, pushing hindquarters because of the use of cannons. The highly schooled horses of earlier times did not exist anymore, but the desire for collection remained.

The horses trained by Steinbrecht all got a thorough gymnastic training, making them fit for dressage in which carrying weight and collection were needed. Steinbrecht meant a lot for the cavalry and educated his horses following the method of Guérinière, but also developed a training method for the Prussian cavalry.

The goal of his training method was to enable the recruits to train their horses during their remounts and to keep their horses in good condition during the long marches between battlefields. While the troops were riding forward, he discovered that soldiers could straighten their horses by asking bending in their horses' necks and bodies and riding lateral movements. The obtained engagement of the hindquarters prepared the horses for collection. From this, his famous quote arose: "Ride your horse forward and straight."

A year after his death, in 1886, his book "Das Gymnasium des Pferdes" came out. He wrote this book for the modern cavalry, so inexperienced riders on inexperienced horses were able to ride more responsibly.

20TH CENTURY

Eventually, the period of the officers' art of riding came to an end. The horse had completed its duty. It was last used in the second world war when the Polish cavalry rode against the German armored offensive.

After the second world war, the first civil riding associations were established. Later, riding schools and livery yards were set up everywhere. Instructors often came from the army and 'drilled' their pupils as they were used to do.

Originally, competitions were a military thing; the left hand held the reins and the right hand manipulated the weapon, but this also changed rapidly. Horse riding became a competitive sport in which the reins were held in two hands.

VON NEINDORFF AND OLIVEIRA

In the 19th century, Steinbrecht and Baucher were two great names. In the 20th century, the two great names were Egon von Neindorff (1923 – 2004) and Nuño Oliveira (1925 – 1989). Just as Steinbrecht and Baucher could not agree with each other, so Von Neindorff and Oliveira strongly disagreed with each other. Both had their own education methods, but the end result was almost the same.

Oliveira learned horse riding from the famous Mestre Miranda and he rode according to the principles of Baucher. He read everything about the art of riding and during his readings, he discovered the greater connection between the different European riding styles. Oliveira had a rounded off judgment on the work of the Duke of Newcastle and the golden thread in Guérinière's work did not pass him by either. He also had a great connection with Steinbrecht's "Das Gymnasium des Pferdes" and none of the works from Baucher's school passed him by. So Oliveira was well-read.

For a long time, Oliveira earned his money by training cavalry horses. Later, he trained many Lusitano horses and finally founded his own riding school. He was often on a world tour with his horses.

Oliveira was able to interpret the old riding school together with the innovations of Baucher and Steinbrecht and his personal experiences. This way, he achieved exceptional brilliance with his horses, in a state of total relaxation and lightness to the aids. Until his death in 1987, he inspired and educated many riders. After his death, Oliveira still has many fans around the world.

Egon von Neindorff was born in 1923 in a noble officer's family and his father was an officer in the German army. At age 10, von Neindorff had his first riding lesson. He first learned the art of riding from his father and later from Felix Bürkner, Richard Wätjen, Ludwig Zeiner, Otto Lörke and also Alois Podhajsky.

Until his death in 2003, von Neindorff guarded the heritage of Steinbrecht. His dream was to preserve the classical tradition.

With Von Neindorff, riders of all levels got the opportunity to learn the classical art of riding. Von Neindorff wanted to deliver independent students who developed themselves into responsible and self-thinking riders. He has devoted 50 years of his life to guiding students from all over the world, towards the natural way of training horses. He said: "Classical riding is natural riding, without force, with lots of feeling and patience."

Oliveira and Von Neindorff have written several books, in which they explain their thoughts about the classical art of riding.

FOUR RIDING SCHOOLS

In the 20th century, besides the two riding masters von Neindorff and Oliveira, four institutions honored the old European riding traditions: The Spanish Riding School in Austria, the Portuguese Royal Riding School in Lisbon, the Royal Andalusian Riding School in Spain and the Cadre Noir in France. These are the four present-day institutions in Europe when it comes to the classical art of riding.

- The Spanish Riding School is over 400 years old. Before the French revolution, private riding schools were founded in several royal courts, to train the horses correctly and teach the riders to ride well. The Spanish Riding School is the most famous example.

At the end of the 18th century, when the troops of Napoleon spread across Europe with their massive cavalry charges, and with the use of fire weapons, the art of riding became redundant. From the 19th century, instead of the royal riding schools, the military riding academies got the leading role in spreading the notions of horse training. The Spanish Riding School in Vienna, however, survived Napoleon, the collapse of the German empire and two world wars. The Spanish Riding School, over 400 years old, is thus the only real remaining institution for the baroque art of riding in the world.

- In the 20th century, there was no more room for the military riding academies either. Only the old French military riding school from 1814 in Saumur remains. After the second world war, horses became redundant on the battlefield, but this military riding school with its officers dressed in black, the Cadre Noir, continued to exist.
 - In 1973, the Andalusian family Domecq brought the old tradition of the royal riding school in Spain back to life. In 1982, the state took over this private school and after that, the school even became "Royal". Don Alvaro Domecq went to Vienna to train, and collected the best Andalusian horses to establish a classical riding institution of high quality in Jerez (Spain).
 - In Portugal, the royal court disappeared and so did the royal riding school. The greatest riding master of the 20th century, Nuño Oliveira, together with his pupils, was responsible for a true revival of the classical art of riding in Portugal. Consequently, in 1979, the riding school was re-established. This riding school is nowadays owned by the state and is a renowned institution where the baroque values of the art of riding are of paramount importance.
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21ST CENTURY

In ancient times, harmony was vital; now, harmony brings us joy and happiness. So for centuries, the same wish has been made around the world, and this wish still exists: to ride horses and to become one with these horses.

Nowadays, more people than ever before can afford a horse and horse riding has become a popular hobby.

But over time things have changed:

- Purpose: up to 1600, a horse was educated with a purpose: to be a war horse.
- Freed from purpose: later, horse riding was freed from its goal and the art of riding became an art in itself.
- Estranged from purpose: now, many generations later, riders are sometimes not only freed from the goal but also estranged from it.

This is why:

In the past, every rider put the art of riding into practice: traveling and hunting were done with horses. This way, the art of riding could not alienate.

Nowadays, the everyday relationship with the horse is missing, so we are not only freed from the original purpose, but sometimes also alienated from the horse itself! And this might lead to several issues when riding. Therefore, many people enjoy taking care of their horses more than the horse riding itself. In some cases, the joy of riding lacks completely because of the accumulation of tension and frustration while riding. Often, riders do not know how to train their horses correctly, and they are not aware of the natural asymmetry and the imbalance that causes.

But remember: with badly trained horses and a lack of harmony, we would never have survived the past centuries. So we should not lose sight of the essence when training and riding our horse and we should, as Pluvinel, Guérinière and Steinbrecht already wrote in their books, use gymnastic exercises to develop the horse symmetrically in body and limbs.

ST ACADEMY

To accomplish balance, harmony and unity students at the Straightness Training Academy are taught according to the ideas and principles of the old grand masters. Marijke de Jong has studied the classical works of all the old riding masters and has pulled out the important concepts and exercises that can truly change a modern horse's life.

Straightness Training aims to help riders achieve harmony and unity with their horse. And thanks to the ST Academy, the original and academic art of riding is accessible to anyone, wherever they are in the world.



Marijke de Jong's Straightness Training Academy aims to form a world wide professional group of loyal and dedicated horse trainers and instructors to the cause of improving health, joy and beauty in working with horses based on the principles of Straightness Training.

The Straightness Training Academy consists of the ST Mastery Program, the ST Evaluation Program and the ST Instructor Program:

- The **ST Mastery Program** offers you a rich and rewarding and balanced exercise program to get your horse fit and strong, no matter what breed or age. This program aims to transform riders into Straightness Training experts and experienced horse trainers.
 - The structured **ST Evaluation program** is designed to evaluate and measure the level of skill of rider and horse. Through videos rider and horse can demonstrate their ability to perform the ST exercises that are outlined in ST Mastery. Via valuable evaluation forms with tips and advice the rider is able to set the next on his or her personal path to Mastery, wherever he's based in the world.
 - When students have passed a certain set of evaluations in the Training Pillars groundwork, longeing, work in hand, riding a nd liberty, they can enroll in the international **ST Instructor Program**.
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The History of Grandmasters and their Riding Academies

The educational programs of the ST Academy help students to optimize their training skills by applying the academical concepts and exercises in their own training sessions with their own horses. This way they can actualize their horse's potential and reach harmony and unity with their horse.

All concepts and exercises are shared with the students in fun, inspiring, super-practical online Mastery modules, on topics like:

- Horsemanship
- Training skills
- Groundwork
- Longeing
- Work in hand
- Riding
- Training at liberty

Mastery students have Marijke de Jong as their personal coach on their personal path to mastery.

The wonderful thing about the ST Academy is that students will reach Marijke de Jong and like-minded Mastery students all across the world, but they never have to leave home!

Ancient wisdom, modern science, common sense, practical experience, fun and mastery, that's what the ST Academy is all about and we'd love to have you join us!

For more information:

www.StraightnessTraining.com/Academy

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