

CLASSICAL THEORY FOR LUNGEING THE RIDER ON THE HORSE

Introduction

Only from an independent and well-balanced seat can the horse be influenced correctly. This is one of the maxims of dressage which is as important as following the guidelines of the pyramid of training.

Consider that over a period of more than 400 years the Spanish Riding School has continually educated horses and riders to the highest level. One of the chief components of this success is the fact that students at the school spend their first year exclusively on the lunge line before being allowed to ride the school masters. After that they progress to training horses themselves under expert guidance.

Every serious student of dressage should first work on establishing independent balance within the proper form before influencing the horse in any way. Many a talented horse will never be brought to his full potential because the rider wants to “train” too soon, before the seat has achieved truly independent balance from the hands. Such a rider may well be able to get the horse to do all the movements, but this will adversely affect the horse’s biomechanics, and, at best, result in lack of elegance and relaxation.

Even more advanced riders should be lunged periodically to insure consistent independent balance, thus enabling them to apply the aids with more sophistication.

Purpose of Lungeing the Rider on the Horse – Seat Lesson

Development of Initial Balance for a Safe, Secure Seat

- Distribution of weight (seat-bones and crotch)
- Upper body perpendicular behind withers, both longitudinally and laterally
- Use of legs for balance and security
- Controlled intentional gripping, when needed
- Suppleness

Development of Classical Seat and Position

- Familiarization with classical form (see *Principles of Riding*)
- Suppleness within the form
 - * Exercises
 - * Meaning of “Relaxation”
 - * Breathing

Independence of Seat, Leg and Hand

- Exercises to reduce the instinct to balance with the hands
- Independent use of legs and hands
- Teaching the student to carry out exercises with arms while maintaining the best possible leg position, and vice versa

Development of Feel

- Feel for horse’s movement
 - * Feel for gaits, footfalls, rhythm, etc.
 - * Feel for horse’s use of back
- Coordination of Balance Between Horse and Rider
 - * Perpendicular behind withers, laterally and longitudinally
 - * Going with the movement

- * Not going excessively with the movement
- * Not being behind the movement

Communication with the Horse

- The Aids
 - * Natural aids: seat, legs, hands, voice
 - * Artificial aids: spurs, whip
 - * How to apply the aids
 - * Timing of aids
- Feel for dosage (intonation of aids)
- Coordination of the aids
- Coordination of the aids with horse's movement
- Timing of aids: when to be passive, when to be active
- When to reward (pat, praise)