

Lipizzans...Art and History All Rolled Up into One!

by Carole Gauger

A Brief History of the LIPIZZAN Breed

The Lipizzan traces its history to the Spanish horse of the 16th Century. The Spanish horse was a cross of the Arabian and Berber stallions with Iberian (or Andalusian) mares. The product of this breeding was the ideal horse for the Baroque era, with physical strength, intelligence, courage and a noble appearance. When the Moors were driven from Spain in 1492, the very high standard of breeding they reached during their 700-year reign gradually declined.

About 1562 Maximilian II brought the Spanish horses to Austria and founded the court stud at Kladrub. His brother, Archduke Charles, established more Spanish breeding stock in 1580 at Lipizza, near the Adriatic Sea. This was a region famous for breeding fine horses for chariot races and for tournaments (jousting) from ancient time. The Kladrub stud became known for producing heavy carriage horses for the Monarchy to use for parades for their fancy coaches. The Lipizza stud produced riding horses and light carriage horses for the Monarchy, for the most part.

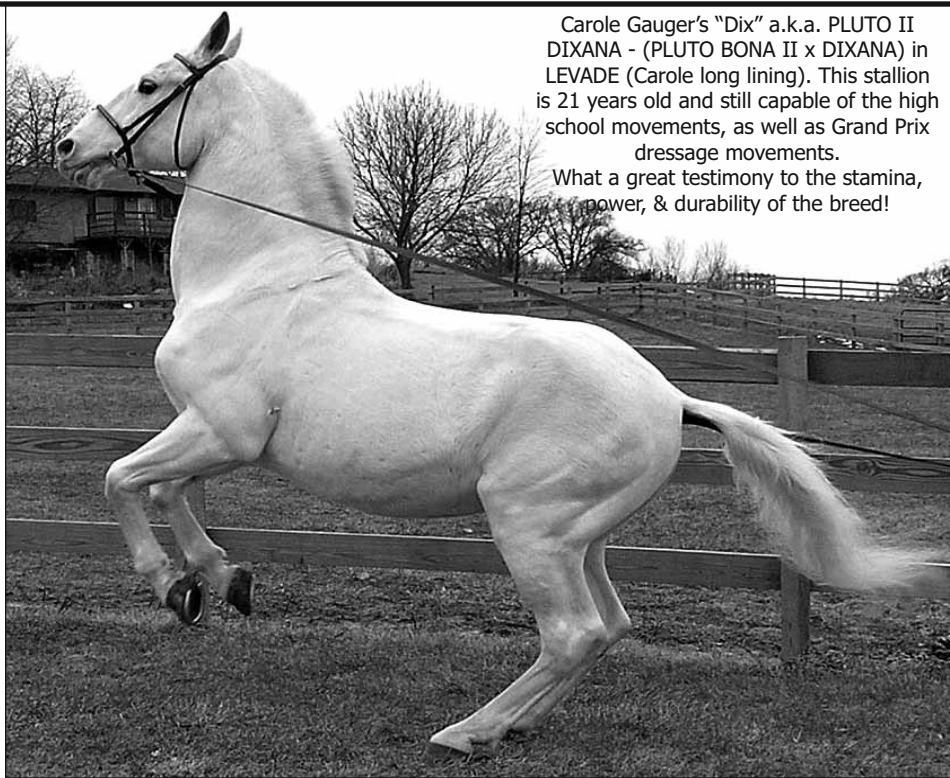
The Lipizzan became the ideal riding horse for royalty and noblemen because of its noble appearance, docility, intelligence, and long lifespan (30 years or more). The royal family preferred white horses, so the color was stressed in breeding, thus that is the predominant color of Lipizzans today.

Through the centuries the Lipizzans had several near-escapes from extinction. Napoleon's armies fought through Austria 4 different times, causing the Lipizzans to be spirited away to various places for safety. These travels were not easy on the mares and foals and the breed was close to extinction more than once. The armies caused destruction of the stud farm, their barns and records, also. Upon returning and rebuilding the stables, an earthquake caused extensive damage, forcing the horse caretakers to once again begin rebuilding the stable area.

After World War I, and the Austro-Hungarian monarchy was dissolved, the Austrian share of the horses were moved to Piber, in southern Austria. Some of the horses were sent to Italy, and a few to other countries.

At the end of World War II, the breed was once again faced with extinction when Hitler refused to allow the stallions to leave Vienna. He wanted the performances to continue weekly so that the Austrians would not know that Germany was losing the war. The mares had been moved to Czechoslovakia for safekeeping.

When Allied bombers began to reign



Carole Gauger's "Dix" a.k.a. PLUTO II DIXANA - (PLUTO BONA II x DIXANA) in LEVADE (Carole long lining). This stallion is 21 years old and still capable of the high school movements, as well as Grand Prix dressage movements.

What a great testimony to the stamina, power, & durability of the breed!

terror on the city of Vienna, Col. Alois Podhajsky moved the stallions to northern Austria, and while there, begged the protection of the American Army through General Patton. Gen. Patton had been a horseman all his life, and had ridden at the Olympics. He immediately made plans to send troops into Czechoslovakia to bring the mares back to Austria, as Russia was about to take over Czechoslovakia, and it was feared all the horses would be eaten.

Under cover of night, the Allied tanks, jeeps and trucks moved all of the Lipizzan horses back into Austria. There is now a plaque in the Spanish Riding School of Vienna that says something to the effect, "thanks to God and the Americans that the Lipizzan breed exists today".

At the end of the war, General Patton was given four Lipizzans that were brought to this country with a boatload of the world-famous horses. Sadly, he did not live to ride any of the horses. He died in a jeep accident in Europe a year or so later.

Since 1977, many of us that appreciated the historical significance of the breed have worked to form the official U.S. LIPIZZAN REGISTRY, which was incorporated in 1980. We have over 1,100 Lipizzans registered in this country today, and continue to see them gain favor as the only horse truly bred for Dressage.

In 1989, CRESCENDO, a half-Lipizzan by PLUTO BONA II, won USDF Grand Prix Horse of the Year awards. The next year, 1990, a purebred Lipizzan stallion owned

by Kit Young Knotts won the very same award. Since the 1980's Lipizzans have been winning at every level of Dressage, as well as World-Championship driving competitions. They are also excelling in this country as ranch horses, able to herd cattle with the best horses, as Dude Ranch mounts, and as delightful pleasure mounts.

The proud bearing, the athletic prowess, and the "learnability" which have now been bred into Lipizzans for over 400 years, echoes the beauty and harmony of movement of their ancestors. To own a Lipizzan is to own a piece of art and a piece of history.

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Carole and "Dix" share a quality moment.

