

DRESSAGE

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David Holmes

*The future
of BRITISH
Dressage*

Breeding
supplement
INSIDE

From the
GROUND UP
with David Pincus

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1 and Followers of their methods

DAVID PINCUS PART 1

2 work in hand teaches the horse to accept collection - it teaches the horse to accept the demand of being condensed between the driving and the • Reserving Aids

Work in hand

As a former pupil of Vienna, David Pincus has used work in hand for years with his own horses adapting the practice to his own needs and the needs of each particular horse. He explains his methods to Carole Thornton.

For many years the art of working the horse in hand was practised by the masters of equine training. The art is very rarely used in the modern schools but is still an integral part of the programme of training at the Spanish riding school.

* "Top class riders with very talented horses

are able to achieve great competition results without using work in hand but less talented horses and riders would benefit from this form of training," explains David.

Traditionally, work in hand has been used from the early stages of training as a method of establishing communication between

horse and trainer and to develop collection. The ultimate expression of this achievement was displayed in the piaffe. The horse must learn to:

- Pay attention and accept his trainer's demands
- Physically and mentally accept the influence of the aids
- Change his natural balance to the balance and shape required of the trained horse, i.e. lowered, engaged hind legs and a raised and arched neck

Work in hand offers the opportunity to gymnasticise the horse in piaffe without putting him under stress and strain physically or mentally. It is therefore possible to start with younger horses and gradually develop to the full piaffe.

"Experience has confirmed that many problems due to the limitations of the horse or the riders lack of experience can be overcome with a few effective sessions of working the horse from the ground," says David. "A riding session on a horse that is strong and difficult to collect and ride on the bit can quickly turn into a pulling match. Working from the ground with correctly adjusted side reins can show the horse the correct shape and position of the neck and the use of the hind legs, making him easier to ride. This is the original aim of this work."

The work is always carried out indoors or in a restricted area. Horses are traditionally worked in side reins and from a cavesson but David usually trains without an assistant and prefers the greater control he has when using a bridle.

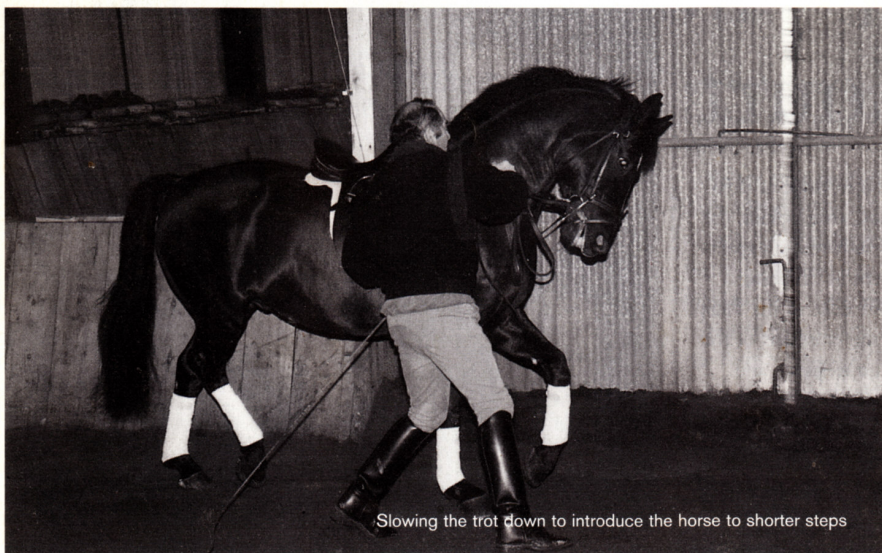
"With a big warmblood I find leading the horse off the cavesson does not give me enough control and the horse may try to pull me forward. The actual decision to lead the horse off the bit or from a cavesson will depend on his sensitivity and reactions. With some horses which are very strong, two trainers are required."

This work is also successful with horses which tend to shy. Working near the cause of the shying conditions the horse to concentrate and pay attention to his trainer, although his instincts tell him otherwise!

Initially, work from the ground is used as an exercise to improve the strength of the hind legs and also the horses agility. From



Trotting the horse forward in balance



Slowing the trot down to introduce the horse to shorter steps

the ground the trainer can see what the horse is actually doing – what shape he is taking – and react accordingly. The whip is used to activate and drive the hind legs forward and under the horse, and the rein regulates the amount of forwardness permitted.

With a young horse David leads the horse forward in walk. The horse is then asked to trot and repeatedly to perform transitions from walk to trot and trot to walk. This will encourage him to pay attention to his trainer until eventually he begins to read the trainer's body language and obeys with only the slightest aid.

The next stage is to develop the half steps – very collected diagonal steps with the correct balance but without suspension. The forward movement is restricted but the hind legs are activated to allow the horse to move forward in a slow, controlled manner – not faster than a man's slow walk pace. The horse should not lean on the rider's hand. Should he try to rush through he should be restrained with short, sharp half halts and then allowed to go forward in a controlled manner.

If the horse tends to ignore the half halts and continues to rush through the hand and drop onto the shoulder to avoid collection, sharp transitions to halt and sometimes rein-back are required in order to show him that he needs to shift his weight back onto his hind legs. The horse can then be asked to execute the half steps or piaffe from the rein-back.

"Some horses can become over engaged but without activity. In these cases it is important to allow some forward movement and often to trot out of the half steps and then to execute the piaffe again," says David.

When the horse executes the half steps without objection the hind legs are acti-

vated and the horse is encouraged to develop some spring and suspension.

When the horse starts to show that he is able to do a few steps of piaffe the trainer must aim to improve any weak points. Some horses need to develop better rhythm, some to improve the shape and balance and some to respond better to the driving aid.

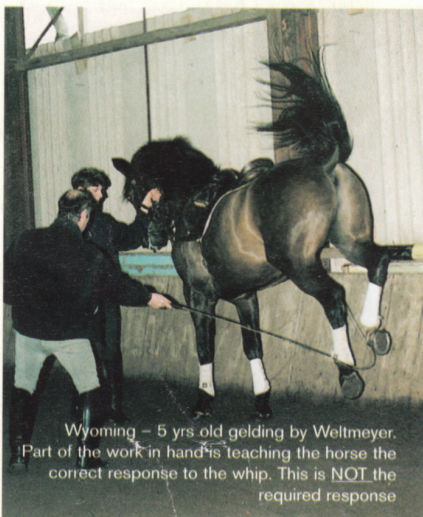
"According to the horse's reactions I can decide how to progress," David explains. "The aim is for the horse to piaffe by himself with a light signal and without much need for the restraining rein aid. This work is very tiring for both horse and trainer and I only spend about 10-15 minutes in this way before I ride

the horse."

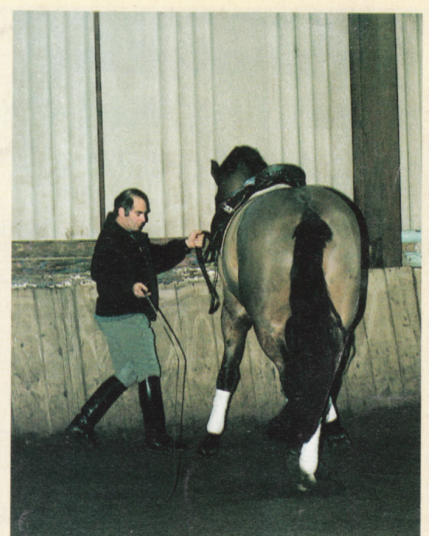
In the following article, David explains in greater detail the various methods used and the progression from the young horse to the more advanced work.



Würlitzer – 6 yrs old stallion by Weltmeyer



Wyoming – 5 yrs old gelding by Weltmeyer. Part of the work in hand is teaching the horse the correct response to the whip. This is NOT the required response



Suppleness and the correct response to the whip is helped by executing turns on the forehand from the ground. This is not necessary with every horse. The horse understands that he has to move away from the whip – sideways or forwards