

FREE FREESTYLE CLINIC FOR HDS MEMBERS by Sandra Adair



Karen Robinson, from Applause Dressage, will be coming for a freestyle clinic Friday, January 9th through Monday, January 12th. **This will be a membership drive clinic for HDS, so if you pay your 2004 dues you can audit for FREE!**

There will be someone from HDS at the clinic each day so you can renew your membership at the door. The clinic will run from 9 to 5 on Friday and Monday, and 8 to 5 on Saturday and Sunday with 8 to 10 rides a day. There are some 20 riders of all ages, at all levels from First to Grand Prix. In the initial session the rider will learn how to determine their horse's tempos. Then music is chosen to suit the horse and rider. Karen brings a large selection of music from many genres and has a special gift for finding just the right music for each horse! It's amazing to watch how different music affects the way a horse looks! The rider learns to develop a feel for riding to a constant tempo and to different types of music. This is probably the most fun part of the clinic (riders have said it's like having a personal horse DJ!), and can take up most of the first session. In the second session, the rider warms up to their music, and then the focus turns to choreography. Using a piece of music that suits the horse's tempo and way of going, Karen works together with the rider on designing a pattern that conforms to the technical requirements for that pair's level. The rider learns to interpret transitions in the music and to perform movements in a sequence that takes advantage of these transitions. By the end of two sessions, the rider will have gone through the entire freestyle design process.

On Saturday, in addition to the rides, which commence after lunch, there will be a Freestyle Video Seminar from 8 to 11, during which Karen will discuss how freestyles are created and judged. Attendees will learn about every step of the design process, and what to consider when choosing music. They will watch videos of internationally and locally performed freestyles, and look at sample judges' score sheets. Karen goes into considerable depth in explaining how freestyle tests are judged, and why there is often surprise at the scoreboard. She welcomes questions throughout the lecture, as well as at the end. The depth and breadth of topics covered makes the lecture meaningful to anyone interested in dressage freestyles.



The auditing fee for non-members is \$20 for Saturday's seminar and rides, \$25 for the whole clinic, or \$10/day for Friday, Sunday or Monday. There will be free coffee and bagels for everyone each morning and gourmet box lunches available for \$5 each day.

For those of you who have not heard of Karen, you are in for a treat! Based in Vancouver, B.C., Karen says she has always had freakishly diverse tastes in music, and bets she was the only sixteen year old in Canada who had Softcell, Chopin, Soviet Red Army Chorus, Neil Diamond and Andean flute records in active, simultaneous use. 2003 has been a tremendous year for Applause Dressage. Karen's clients continue to range from local talent to Olympic hopefuls! Leslie Reid made a clean sweep of the Pan Am Games, and is on her way to qualifying for a spot on the Canadian Olympic



team. Client Rochelle Kilberg made it to the Pan Am team shortlist. Shannon Dueck represented Canada at the 2003 World Cup Final after winning the Canadian League final at the 2002 Royal Winter Fair in front of thousands of spectators. 2004 will be another exciting year for Karen, as Canadian clients Christilot Boylen, Shannon Dueck, Julia Vysniauskas and Evi Strasser also compete for team spots at the Athens Olympics. American Olympic team hopeful Leslie Morse is currently in Europe competing with a new freestyle designed by Applause Dressage. Elodie Sarrazin of France is the new French National Champion. Miguel Ralão Duarte and Mafalda Galiza Mendes are the new Portuguese senior and junior champions, dancing to their wins with Applause freestyles. Chilean rider Mario Vargas is Karen's first South American client as she works with him on Grand Prix freestyles for his qualification for Athens 2004. Karen enjoys working with clients of all ages and at all levels, like designing a pas de deux for a couple who entered to "When I'm Sixty-Four" and finished their final trot down centre line holding hands to "I Wanna Hold Your Hand"! For more information on Karen, check out her website, www.applausedressage.com, and her article in the September '03 issue of Dressage Today.

Now I know many of you are thinking that there's NO WAY you'd ever be able to do a freestyle!! Well, let me tell you what I've learned. When I ride to music, I start moving with the beat, Charisma's gaits become more regular, and voila! we have rhythm and relaxation, the essential base of the training pyramid!! So I strongly encourage you to come learn how to measure tempos and pick music to ride to, even if you don't yet want to venture into choreography yet. Riding a freestyle pattern has helped me to pay attention to every step I ride, making sure I prepare for each movement (or I end up in the wrong place at the wrong time!!) Being a relaxed yet more conscious rider, I have helped Charisma be more elastic, attentive and confident, and have greatly improved our harmony. As a result, our collective remarks scores are higher in our regular tests as well. And last but certainly not least, IT IS A BLAST!! And if you ask Karen "Who rides freestyles?" she'll tell you "EVERYONE! Children on ponies, adult amateurs, world champions. If you compete in dressage at any level, you can ride a freestyle. And you should. Freestyles are fun to create, and even more fun to perform. Do the horses enjoy them? Of course! There's nothing like doing a big trot to a loud part in the music to give a horse a chance to show off a little. Horse might not be able to actually dance, but they can certainly play. Freestyles offer the opportunity to let the individual in the horse be expressed. It is no coincidence that a horse's best performance is often in the freestyle. So what are you waiting for? Turn up the music!"



If you plan on auditing the clinic, please email me at stadair@houston.rr.com so I can get an idea of a head count for bagels and lunch! Directions to the clinic can be found on my website, www.willowforkranch.com. If you are interested in riding in the clinic, you can get on the waiting list by emailing me as well.

Vickie Esquivel and Rancho Los Ecuestres in Katy have generously donated their facility for this clinic, which means there is a covered arena with stadium seating and plenty of parking! So there's room for all of you! So let's get 2004 off to an "allegro" start! Come have fun, visit with friends, learn something new and plan on being inspired!