



# *The Contact*

*Keeping Members Informed*

Nebraska Dressage Association - [www.nebraskadressage.org](http://www.nebraskadressage.org) - January/February 2013 Edition

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## Michael Beining Clinic Held in Omaha January 10-13

There was another great turnout for the Michael Beining clinic held at Quail Run Horse Centre and Elkhorn Equestrian Center in Omaha, NE. Beining spent four days teaching and instructing dressage enthusiasts with great results. A very informative lecture was given on Friday the 11<sup>th</sup> in which Beining discussed the seat in great detail. The lecture began with an overview of the rider's skeletal system and video that demonstrated the relationship between the rider's body and the horse's movement. Beining also discussed the seat differences between multiple professional dressage riders by showing a number of different videos.

A short discussion followed in which Michael described his theory of 9-parts core stability and seat to 1 part hands, arms, and legs. Afterwards, all attendees had the opportunity to participate in some seated exercises. It was very educational and everyone enjoyed the experience.

In conclusion to his lecture, Beining also outlined five simple steps every rider should follow at the beginning of, and during, each ride:

1. **Mindset:** Ensure that you have a calm, concentrated mind. Make sure you're not scattered and take the time to find your 'center'.
2. **Body Awareness:** Take a moment to assess your body and muscles, allow yourself to relax and go to 'zero' (relax all muscles to zero muscle tone, to the degree possible), release any tension and be aware of where you feel tension or tightness. Recognize if you are tight, tense, or loose. Just being aware of your current condition gives you some insight into how you will be affecting the horse's movements and reactions.
3. **Put on Your Dressage Seat:** Put yourself into the correct riding position and prepare to ride.
4. **As-If Exercises:** Play future actions through in your head. Pay attention to how your body reacts as you pretend 'as-if' you are about to do something. When preparing to move into the walk, do you lift your left shoulder? Does your hand rise or tighten? Ask yourself if these movements are critical or if they are wasted movement and energy. Correct yourself. Go back to zero and try again.
5. **Transition into Work:** Do not be afraid to start this process over again as needed throughout your ride.

See page 4 for more information about Michael Beining and upcoming clinics.

*The wind of  
heaven is that  
which blows  
between a  
horse's ears.*

## NDA Member Dallas Van Stratten Awarded Dressage Federation Grant

### THE DRESSAGE FOUNDATION'S RENEE ISLER FUND PROVIDES FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR TWO YOUNG RIDERS

The Dressage Foundation's Renee Isler Dressage Support Fund recently provided two scholarships to young riders for their participation in educational clinics.

Dallas Van Stratten of Fort Calhoun, Nebraska, participated in the United States Dressage Federation's Region 4 Junior/Young Rider Clinic with Jan Ebeling on December 8-9, 2012. Dallas received a \$300 grant to help her pay for the clinic with her horse, Vainqueur E.

"I am so grateful to have received the Renee Isler Fund scholarship that enabled me to participate in this clinic," said Dallas. "It was a great opportunity to help push my riding to the next level. An amazing teacher once told me that 'You need to have a lot of ideas before you can have a good one,' and I believe that applies to this clinic 100 percent. I always take every opportunity I have to further my knowledge of the sport and be the best I can be."



*Photo Courtesy of Merrick Studios Equine Photography*

Renee's Fund also awarded a \$250 grant to Rosie Julian-Simoes of Barrington Hills, Illinois. Rosie and her horse, Proteus, have been selected to ride in the Robert Dover Horsemastership Clinic in Florida January 2-6, 2013.

Rosie said, "I am so thankful that The Dressage Foundation provides young riders with the financial support to further their educations. I feel extremely lucky to have been given this grant! This clinic will be an unforgettable experience that will influence my career in the horse industry, and I am beyond excited for my horse Proteus and I to continue learning together. Thanks again to Renee Isler and The Dressage Foundation for supporting me!"

Since 2008, the Renee Isler Dressage Support Fund has provided nearly \$40,000 in grants/scholarships to support young riders, the USDF Jr/YR Clinic Series, and dressage professionals. For more information about this Fund, go to [www.dressagefoundation.org/Renee\\_Isler\\_Dressage\\_Support\\_Fund.htm](http://www.dressagefoundation.org/Renee_Isler_Dressage_Support_Fund.htm) or contact Jenny Johnson at (402)434-8585 or [jenny@dressagefoundation.org](mailto:jenny@dressagefoundation.org).

#### The Dressage Foundation

The Dressage Foundation is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, tax-exempt, donor-driven organization that is dedicated to supporting and advancing the sport of dressage. The organization solicits contributions, appropriately allocates the donations, and awards grants and scholarships to dressage riders of all ages and levels. For more information, please visit [www.dressagefoundation.org](http://www.dressagefoundation.org).

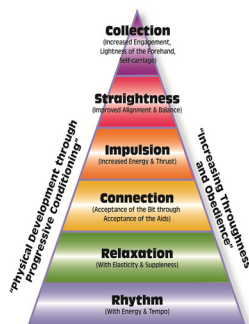
## Training and Development of the Dressage Horse

### Pyramid of Training Part 2

By Shaina Kennedy

The previous edition of the Contact contained an introduction to the pyramid of training and gave a brief description of the first to levels of training, rhythm and relaxation. In this installment of the pyramid of training, a brief description of the next two levels of training, connection and impulsion, will be given a brief overview.

#### Pyramid of Training



Keep in mind that the training scale was intended as a written progression of steps to be taken in schooling the dressage horse, "start to finish." However, a horse's physical development, its mental understanding of what is being asked of it, and the ease with which it potentially relates to the human, can be sought after in any riding style or discipline. Therefore, the pyramid can be applied to any horse whose work demands athletic skill, and can be studied by horsemen and women who wish to increase their level of understanding (at least intellectually) about the bodybuilding phases a horse must go through to perform increasingly difficult actions or movements.

#### CONTACT

Contact is the soft, steady connection between the rider's hand and the horse's mouth. Many people mistake contact for the horse being on the bit. That is not necessarily true and denotes riding with the hands alone. A horse moving under a rider is in contact with his seat, legs, and hands. Good contact is when the horse accepts and responds to seat and leg aids while maintaining a round outline with a mouth that is relaxed and accepting the bit. You can point out good contact when the horse's back is raised, his quarters engaged, his poll the highest point (except when the horse is being ridden forwards and downwards), his jaw relaxed, and his nose a hint in front of the vertical.



The horse should go rhythmically forward from the rider's driving aids and "seek" a contact with the rider's hand, thus "going onto" the contact. A correct, steady contact allows the horse to find its balance under the rider and find a rhythm in each of the gaits. The contact should never be achieved through a backward action of the hands; it should result from the correctly delivered forward thrust of the hind legs. The horse should go forward confidently onto the contact in response to the rider's driving aids.

#### IMPULSION

A horse is said to have impulsion when the energy created by the hind legs is being transmitted into the gait and into every aspect of the forward movement. A horse can be said to be working with impulsion when it pushes off energetically from the ground and swings its feet well forward. Impulsion is created by training. This free-flowing energy is initiated by the rider, causing the horse's back to swing, his quarters to engage, and his forelegs to articulate the impulsion. The rider makes use of the horse's natural paces, but "adds" to them looseness, forward thrust (originating in the hindquarters) and suppleness. Good impulsion is mirrored through a horse that appears to have an innate desire to go forward with active, lively steps. How far the horse steps underneath his barrel and how much he engages his hocks are both measures of impulsion. Basic training regulates the horse's engine so that impulsion becomes second nature to the horse and the rider does not have to push all the time.



## Trainer and Clinician Michael Beining

*Contributors: Dan Urban, Melissa Piennett, Shaina Kennedy*

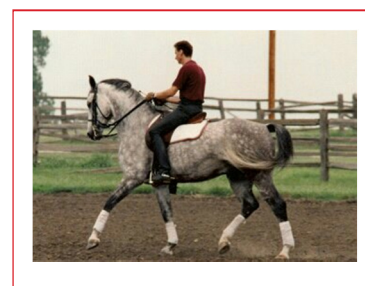
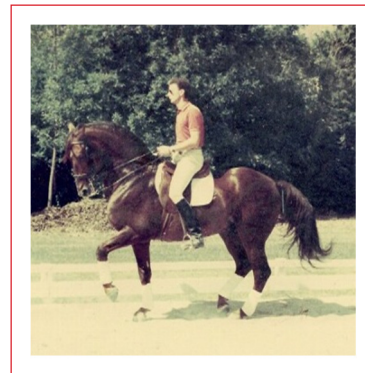
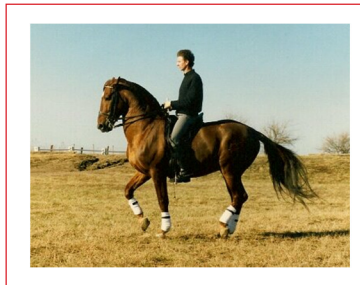
Quail Run Horse Centre and Elkhorn Equestrian Center are fortunate to have the opportunity to host clinics with dressage trainer and breeder Michael Beining and would like to invite you to his upcoming clinics held in Omaha, NE. Originally from Germany, Michael has devoted his life to our beloved sport of dressage. Michael's comprehensive and structured approach is founded upon classical German dressage training principals, focusing on the development of the rider and the horse by increasing awareness of sensitivity and feeling.

Michael has regularly instructed in Germany, Great Britain, and the United States since 1985, including organizing a U.S. tour for dressage master Willi Schultheis during 1986 and 1987. Michael has also trained under the instruction of Willi Schultheis and Rudolf Zeilinger, the Danish Olympic dressage coach. Many of Michael's students have gone on to become professional trainers themselves, or to work for other trainers such as Rudolf Zeilinger, Juergen Koschel, Carl Hester, and Hubertus Schmidt.

Michael has enthusiasm and drive for teaching riders and horses at any level. He enjoys working with students who have respect and love for the horses, who are patient and motivated, and who are willing to overcome their inabilities or inexperience. In addition to teaching, Beining is also a successful sporthorse breeder and regularly travels to Europe to buy horses and attend clinics.

Beining comes to Omaha on a bi-monthly basis and divides his time between Quail Run Horse Centre and Elkhorn Equestrian Center. Auditing of the lessons is always free. Additionally, each clinic usually includes an informative lecture on Friday evenings in the lounge at Elkhorn Equestrian Center. The lecture is open to anyone interested and attendance is encouraged! If you would like to attend, feel free to bring some food or drinks to share as this is a pot luck gathering.

If you are interested in attending any upcoming clinics, please contact Dan Urban or Melissa Piennett to obtain current pricing and schedules for upcoming clinics.



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## Advice and Insight for Buying Your Next Dressage Horse

Michael Beining recently gave an insightful lecture on what to look for when looking to purchase your next dressage horse. Here are some highlights from the lecture and some advice from one of the regions foremost experts on dressage horses. These are ordered in importance from least important to most important, according to Beining.

Beining's most important piece of advice: Never buy a green or unbroken horse. For an amateur, the horse should be trained to at least first- or second-level. Beining clearly explained that he would not buy a green or unbroken horse for himself, or a client, for a number of reasons. One very important reason is that young green horses are more likely to injure themselves. The vast majority of major injuries occur in horses between the ages of 6 months and 3 years. Avoid that risk and look for a horse that is already started and trained by a competent professional.

### CONFORMATION

- Ideally the horse will have a slim, clean throatlatch to allow the horse to flex properly at the poll.
- The horse should be built 'uphill' (i.e., the withers should be higher than the croup). The croup may be long or short, but not overly sloped.
- The neckline should be uphill as well, on a nicely sloped shoulder, and the neck would ideally be short, rather than long.
- Pronounced withers should be set back from the shoulder, and should feed into a medium-length back. If the back is too short, the horse will have difficulty bending.
- Look for freedom in the elbows to allow the horse adequate range of motion.
- Legs should be straight and clean. Avoid horses with overly long fetlocks as this is a sign of weakness. In Beining's experience, a horse that toes out in front is more desirable than a horse toes in, but in either case, it may not be an issue.
- Beining believes that the back legs are more important than the front legs as the horse's impulsion comes from behind. A horse with a weak hind end will have difficulty performing. Look for a horse with low hocks and short cannon bones. Sickie hocks are a sign of weakness.
- And of course, a larger sized horse is more desirable, more impressive, but is definitely not the most important aspect.

### MOVEMENT

- Do not evaluate a horse's movement when the animal is excited. If his tail is flying like a flag and he's snorting like a wild mustang, you will not be able to evaluate the horse's true movements properly. Allow the horse ample time to cool off and relax, then evaluate.
- The horse should move uphill and show freedom of movement in the gaits. Avoid a horse that is overly heavy on the forehand and plows into the ground.
- The entire body and movement should be elastic and fluid.
- The horse's movement should be active in the forearms and the hocks. The dressage horse will not have flat-kneed movement at the walk.
- Ideally in the walk, the hind leg will almost come into contact with the rear of the front hoof during the stride. The rear hoof will almost land in the front hoof print.

### CHARACTER

- The horse should have a good disposition and should be respectful and obedient with his handlers.
- The ideal horse should be very 'rideable'. By this, Beining means that the horse should try; the horse will offer a response when the rider asks. Not that the horse should always offer the correct response, but that he is trying to



please the rider. A horse that consistently fights his rider does not have good rideability and will be difficult to advance on. Rideability cannot be trained - this is an innate ability. In many cases, rideability will trump less than ideal movement and certain conformational flaws.

- Search for a horse that is in front of the leg. A horse that is electric off the leg may be too responsive for an amateur. On the other hand, a horse that is too lazy or heavy on the leg may force the rider to work too hard to obtain the necessary forward movement.
- The horse should maintain a good contact with the rider's hand, and should ideally have a forgiving nature to accommodate for the amateur's abilities. Never buy a horse that is terrible with the connection. Beining stresses that this will only cause frustration for both the horse and rider.

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK THE SELLER AND ADVICE FOR BUYERS

- How long has the horse been under saddle?
- Who has been riding the horse? For how long?
- What training has the horse had?
- When evaluating the horse under saddle, *always* have the owner or daily rider ride the horse first. Pay attention to how the horse is ridden. Ask questions. Why is the rider doing certain things?
- Ask the rider to ride the horse a certain way to evaluate the horse's reactions. For example, ask the rider to put on spurs and ride, ride with a whip, etc.
- Ride the horse like the owner, or daily rider, does at first. Then experiment. Push with your leg, bend the neck, be heavy in your hands, etc. Evaluate how the horse reacts.
- Ask to see the horse in the stable to see how his behavior is.
- What is the horse's schedule? Is the horse worked in the morning? Afternoon? Show up at the horse's normal time of work to evaluate.
- Ask to see the horse taken from his stall, handled, tacked up, etc. Evaluate the horse's behavior during all of these activities.
- Never buy a horse upon one single inspection. Go out and look at the horse at different times of the day while the horse is in different settings.
- If possible, have the horse brought to your barn to try out.
- And, most of all, trust no one! Make your own judgments based upon you, and your trainer's, analyses.

*For more information, or to speak with Michael Beining about your next horse purchase, please contact [mbeining2002@yahoo.com](mailto:mbeining2002@yahoo.com).*

### **Local Rider to Attend Dressage Summit February 9 - 12**

Former competitor Jody Brott will be attending the Dressage Summit in Wellington, Florida this February 9-12. Jody has competed at Intro through First Levels and is extremely excited about the opportunity the Dressage Summit presents to the United States Dressage Community. So much so, she will be renewing her NDA/USDF membership for 2013 and gearing up for competition again.

Jody explains, when Walter Zettl presented the USDF Adult Clinic Series, it was a pleasure to watch the horses and riders transform under his guidance. It has been a pleasure to watch Linda Parelli's development and growth under his tutelage the past several years. The Dressage Summit offers a great opportunity to watch as the Parelli's and Walter Zettl share insight into their collaboration with the world.

Adding to the excitement Christopher Hess, Pat Parelli and Klaus Balkenhol will share their expertise and collaboration to the benefit of every horse who is lucky enough to have their owner, rider, or trainer in attendance. This is truly a once in a lifetime opportunity for any dressage enthusiast.

Have fun Jody! Enjoy the beautiful Florida weather and make sure to take lots of pictures for all of us stuck up here in the cold! *Make sure to check out the next edition of the Contact to see the results of the Dressage Summit and some of Jody's pictures.*

## Music Genre Effect on Horse Behavior Evaluated

By Crista Leste-Lasserre, [www.thehorse.com](http://www.thehorse.com)

Ever thought of "jazzing" up your stables? Or getting your horses to "rock 'n' roll" in the stall? Better reconsider your music choices. According to British researchers, classical and country sounds are probably best for equine welfare.

To test the effects of different kinds of music on stabled horses, Clare Carter, BSc, of Hartpury College in Gloucester, England, and her supervisor Linda Greening, MSc, also of Hartpury College, studied eight Thoroughbred geldings that had been stabled for three hours. They played four different kinds of music--classical (Beethoven), country (Hank Williams Jr.), rock (Green Day), and jazz (New Stories)--for 30 minutes each. The researchers recorded detailed behavior observations (120 per horse per genre) according to an equine ethogram (a catalogue of all behaviors or actions exhibited by horses). They also observed the horses' behavior for 30 minutes without music. Greening presented the results of their study at the 2012 conference of the International Society for Equitation Science.



The pair determined that horses showed the same balance of restful and alert behaviors during classical and country music as they did when there was no music at all. But the difference between these kinds of music and silence was that with country, on average, the horses tended to eat more quietly (a natural behavior that reflects calmness and good welfare, said Carter) than they did with silence.

On the other hand, jazz and rock music caused horses to display more frequent stressful behaviors (as compared to silence), indicated by stamping, head tossing, snorting, and vocalizing (whinnying), said Greening. They did not observe any of these behaviors in the horses when classical or country music was played or when there was no music. Carter also noted that while the horses still ate when listening to jazz or rock, they did so nervously, "snatching at food in short bursts," she said.

Jazz seemed to be the most aversive genre of all, according to Carter. "This might be due to the fast tempo and minor key," she said. The researchers also recommended playing music at a volume--only 21 decibels--when in the barn.

In conclusion, said Carter, "The behaviors that horses showed while listening to classical and country music suggested that the music had an enriching effect on the environment of the stabled horse," said Carter.

Further studies are planned for the future, the researchers said.

See the original article [here](#).

## Unique Opportunity – Human & Horse Housing Available in Lincoln!

Looking for a new apartment or rental house? Trying to juggle the cost of board for your horse and your own rent? If you're a single, mature woman that can provide strong references, here is the opportunity you've been looking for!

East Lincoln property owner is looking for one or two roommates to share her home, barn, and INDOOR riding arena. That's right - stable and indoor riding arena included! lene is hoping to rent out the master bedroom and another spare bedroom for up to two roommates. You can bring your horses with you, too!

If you are interested, please contact lene at 402.202.6846.

### Upcoming Events and Clinics

#### Mark Your Calendars!

February 1-3 - Tom Ordway Clinic

April 6-7 - Shaggy Show

April 27 - Middlecross Schooling Show

June 7 - Cornhusker Classic Schooling Show

June 8-9 - Cornhusker Classic Recognized Show

### NDA Sponsors Wanted!

Do you know of any individuals or businesses who would be willing to sponsor the Nebraska Dressage Association events or shows? Are you able to donate yourself? If so, please contact us and let us know. Sponsors are always appreciated. Please contact Ashley Murray ([murray\\_ashley4@yahoo.com](mailto:murray_ashley4@yahoo.com)) or Lisa Van Stratten ([dalevanstratten@huntel.net](mailto:dalevanstratten@huntel.net)) with suggestions or ideas. Thanks!

## NDA Sale Barn Advertising Policy

Sale Barn advertisements are free to NDA members and will run for two issues (four months) unless notification is received to cancel the listing sooner. Non-member rates are listed below. Prices are quotes per listing per issue. Show entry forms or flyers are free to NDA members. Non-members will be charged regular advertising rates.

Full Page Advertisement	Approximately 8" x 10.5"	\$50.00
Half Page Advertisement	Approximately 8" x 5.25"	\$35.00
Quarter Page Advertisement	Approximately 4" x 5.25"	\$25.00
Business Card	Approximately 2" x 3"	\$20.00

If you are interested in advertising in the Contact, please contact Tish Gade-Jones at [tgadejones@nebraska.edu](mailto:tgadejones@nebraska.edu) and copy the Contact editor, Shaina Kennedy, at [shaina.plum@gmail.com](mailto:shaina.plum@gmail.com) with all advertising images and/or documentation in electronic format only. Checks should be made payable to NDA and should be sent to the following address:

C/O Tish Gade-Jones  
1900 South 25<sup>th</sup> Street  
Lincoln, NE 68502

*NDA makes no endorsements or representation in connection with advertisements placed in the Contact.*

### Nebraska Dressage Association Contact

The Contact is a bi-monthly newsletter sent out to current members and is also available on the website.

Do you have any submissions you'd like to share? Photos? Upcoming events? Interesting articles? Please send all ideas and articles to Shaina Kennedy at [shaina.plum@gmail.com](mailto:shaina.plum@gmail.com). Please submit all information for the March/April edition by February 24, 2013. Thank you!

[www.nebraskadressage.org](http://www.nebraskadressage.org)