

Free Style Dressage to Music

By: Lesly Alford

An invitational telephone call was received giving us 4 weeks notice of this impending event, with no doubt on my voice I said "we are in". So the preparations and nerves began with equal ferocity, never having attended or completed in an Egyptian Dressage event.

So ready or not here we come. Now moving two pure Arabian breeding stallions is not an easy task but thanks to the understanding of Khaled Assem we got them safely boxed. Now if you had been around on Friday evening when they came out for a practice you would definitely have placed us first for the rodeo award, they certainly thought they were there for other reasons!!

Saturday arrives and my biggest concern now is the organization, the usual questions from 7a.m what, where, when?? Honestly apart from a small hiccup at 5p.m the organization was practically faultless, thanks to the skills of Khaled and his assistant, Marion Wichmann, who were both seem working extremely hard throughout the day.

Now we have to deal with the new environment on horses that have never been ridden outside of their home, Sharbatly Farm. We had three judges, they sat in a line with big scary umbrellas, enough to startle any good horse and oh! There is a camera man with a huge scary machine resting on his shoulder, standing right on the boards! Ok we can do this, and yes for sure we did get a few startled creatures, but just keep smiling, pretend it didn't happen and continue.

Now the children go first and thanks to the consideration and kindness of Mohamed El-Sherbeiny each child completed their test and a good start it was. Then smoothly into the next class, D2, I just love the sport of horses totally the only sport that is not ageist or sexiast, where adults on huge 17-hand warm bloods competed against children on 14-hand "Baladi" horses equally.

A short delay to our class D3 the biggest class of the day, then my first horse Baioumy, with rider Nicole Knoth, the music starts and it is to be said it was probably one of my most emotional five minutes since I have been training in Egypt. The crowd were silent, the horse held them almost hypnotically, it was pure poetry in motion and then it was

over, what a joy and relief, the boy knew his job and his music (it pays to practice with your music). Now for me the D3 class was the best of the day, 15 riders who had obviously worked hard to get it right and the majority of them being 'first timers'. Then we brought in our second horse, Shedad, who again managed to hold the audience. Now just the waiting game for results. Sadly for the later riders things didn't go quite so smoothly, a few music hiccups and a power cut didn't help matters. This delayed things and our audience started to thin out, which is always a shame, when you have worked so hard it is nice to get a good round of applause when you finish your test. It would also be a good idea to have elevated seating for the audience dressage is definitely more appreciable viewed from above rather than ground level.

So the day was over and what a fabulous day it was, for competitors and audience, an experience definitely to be repeated. A big round of applause for all the organizers and for allowing open competitions, there are a lot of good horses and riders out there waiting for this kind of opportunity. And of course I must not forget to mention, due to our great team work, Sultan El Sharbatly, owner, Nicole Knoth, rider, and Me we took 2nd and 3rd places in our class, not bad for first timers ■

Lesly Alford is an expatriate trainer in Shrbatly farm.



Crowd cramped watching the show in Sakkara C.C.



Eng. Khaled Assem, Mr. Amr Latif, & Dr. Mohamed El-Sherbeiny giving the trophies to the winners.



Young winners of the D2 level.