



ScienceVision and Satel Film present

LIPIZZANER KING AND WARRIOR

A Film by Michael Schlamberger



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ScienceVision and Satel Films present:
“LIPIZZANER – King and Warrior”
A film by Michael Schlamberger

First Broadcast:
Servus TV/Terra Mater - Austria
Wednesday 10th April 2013, 8.15 PM
(52 minutes, 5.1 & 2.0 – HDTV – 16:9)

“LIPIZZANER – King and Warrior” is a film about the oldest domesticated breed of horses to be found anywhere in the world. With breath-taking photography this is the first time that the complete story of the world-famous white stallions of the Spanish Riding School in Vienna has been told in detail. The film tells of the horses’ ancestry in North Africa, to the conquest by the Moors of a large part of what is today Spain, to how the Lipizzaner horse became the symbol of European nobility.

This fascinating and compelling documentary is a co-production of two Austrian production companies, ScienceVision and Satel Film, in association with Servus TV, Terra Mater Factual Studios and the American PBS TV station Thirteen. The production was also supported by Cinestyria, by the Austrian Television Fund, by the Vienna Film Fund and by the State of Lower Austria.



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At the very heart of the film is the story of the close relationship between horse and rider. It is also a journey back into the past when the horse was the emblem of royalty, and monarchs would fight to own the perfect horse.

Our story begins almost a thousand years ago in North Africa when the warrior tribes that are now called the Berbers lived and roamed through the deserts and hills of what is now Morocco. The Berber refers to themselves as “imazighen” - free people. And they were able to be free because of their horses. They are outstanding riders, and their horses even now are their most precious possession. For them the horse symbolises freedom, beauty, strength and power, and their horsemanship was legendary, and their reputation as invincible warriors spread far and wide into the Christian world of Western Europe.

The Berber warriors were the perfect example of ‘man and animal working together in perfect harmony’.

Today that perfect harmony between horse and rider can still be witnessed at the Spanish Riding School. Thankfully, the times of war are now past, but the power and majesty of the horse is still strong in the human mind. For centuries these horses were the proud symbols of European nobility, and over time the horse that was once a warrior became a king.



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But the Lipizzaner horses are far more than just the crown jewels of a fallen and forgotten monarchy. They are renowned for their intelligence and for being gentle and friendly but with their own preference and eccentricities. Each and every horse is an individual.

This intriguing documentary takes us behind the scenes of the Riding School and reveals the private lives of these white stars away from the glamour and rigor of Vienna's Hofburg. We are with the horses during those moments when they are allowed to be what by nature they are - free running animals with a highly organised social structure and instinctive behaviour.

While the stallions give their world acclaimed performances in Vienna, family life for the horses continues in the idyllic and peaceful landscape of western Styria. Here, at the Federal Stud in Piper, the famous white horses of the Spanish Riding School are exclusively bred and their pedigree reaches back for generations. This is the home of the Austrian Lipizzaner, it's the maternity ward, kindergarten and retirement home all in one.

We are given a privileged insight into the close and tight bond between a mare and her foal, until the heartbreaking moment when the foals are weaned and must be separated from their mothers. We also see a stallion as he goes to his 'first day at school' at the training centre at Heldenberg in Lower Austria



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to follow in the footsteps of generations of stallions before him. And we are present when a Lipizzaner finally goes into a well-deserved retirement away from the arena.

Michael Schlamberger, the director and cameraman of the film, is more used to filming wildlife than domestic horses and for him at first this experience was different. “When you film nature documentaries you inevitably come very close to wild animals. For me this has led to some very intense contacts with sharks, lions, bears, and wolves. I have rarely felt uncomfortable then. However, I had never worked with horses before and was afraid to get bitten or kicked so I used to keep a respectful distance.”

But he soon fell under their spell, as he recalls: “When I first encountered the animals at Piber, however, I immediately fell for the docile white animals with the big dark eyes. It was during the filming of the shows at the Spanish Riding School that I completely fell under their spell. In close-ups, the camera shows you every little detail, which creates a special intimacy with what you are filming. It was very touching to see how highly concentrated the animals are when they give their best. Those were emotional moments and I experienced first-hand the archaic fascination that horses still incite in people.”





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Bettina Kuhn, the producer at Satel Film that co-produced the film, remembers: “Like most other people, I only knew the Lipizzaner from the Spanish Riding School and the Federal Stud Piber. In our documentary “King and Warrior” the viewers will get to know the famous white horses from a completely new perspective. Although the animals are world-famous, only few people know about their origins and their wild ancestors. We want to change that with our film.”

As well as the images, another highlight of this production is the musical concept and sound design. Michael Schlamberger always felt that the music had to be an integral component for the film, and from the start planned to use music that was both emotive and had a distinctive local feel.

The composers, Peter Rosmanith and Klaus Trabitsch, created a soundtrack that conveys the emotions and the atmosphere of both Western Europe and North Africa. In the words of Peter Rosmanith: “Inspired by the fantastic footage it was not difficult for us to create a musical foundation that augments the intensity of those images. To realise our musical ideas we largely dispensed with synthetic sound generators and instead used mostly acoustic instruments played by some of our musician friends and us. This seemed to us to be the only way to create a sound that corresponds to the emotional content of the images.”



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The classical pieces of music are another carefully chosen highlight of the film. The Lipizzaner, unlike many Austrian cultural items, are irrevocably connected with Vienna.

During their performances the white stallions move gracefully to the strains of the Radetzky March, but it is impossible not to think of a great European cultural heritage, one that Richard Wagner once called “the most exquisite orchestra in the world.” - the Vienna Philharmonic.

Because of the close cooperation between the producers of the film and the Vienna Philharmonic and the Universal Music Group, the Lipizzaner now dance to the classic melodies of Johann Strauss and Franz Schubert.

The production of “LIPIZZANER – Warrior and King” took two years, and in order to tell the complete story Michael Schlamberger and his team travelled to Morocco, the part of Spain still known as Andalusia, Slovenia and in Austria to Piber in Lower Styria, Heldenberg in Lower Austria and to the Spanish Riding School in Vienna itself.

This fascinating documentary will also be broadcast in North America on the PBS network this summer.



Wiener Philharmoniker im Musikverein; Foto: Richard Schuster





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Klaus Trabitsch

MUSIC PERFORMED BY Wiener Philharmoniker
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