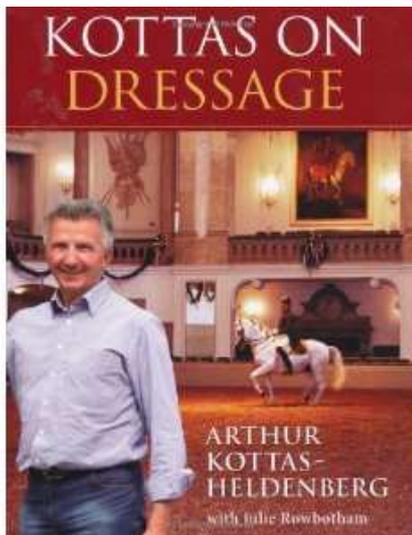


Kottas on Dressage

Principles and lessons of the Spanish Court Riding School in Vienna

Introduced by Ulrike Amler.



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The Spanish Court Riding School in Vienna is probably the most famous venue where the art of classical riding is practiced and preserved. Arthur Kottas-Heldenberg was one of its students and rose to the rank of first senior rider. With his book “Kottas on Dressage” he follows in the literary footsteps of the famous director of the world famous riding school, Alois Podhajsky and his book “The Art of Classical riding”. In his book Kottas-Heldenberg gives the reader important insights into the teaching and training methods of the renowned Austrian educational centre. Here the trainer hits the nerve with ambitious weekend riders as well as show riders. The language is clear and simple. The author avoids complicated jargon and thereby offers even the interested beginner a valuable read to accompany his or her first steps in the saddle.

In true Vienna tradition the author makes the importance of a correct seat very clear and expands on schooling of the seat on the longe, according to what is being taught at the Spanish Riding School. Here not only beginners are schooled on the longe for a long time, but also advanced rider colleagues use this tool on a regular bases to have their seat corrected. Step by step he increases the challenge and difficulty of tasks and lessons, in accordance with the scale of dressage training. Especially interesting here are Kottas' explanations with regards to schooling the horse on the longe. He focuses on the correct equipment and the correct use of side reins according to the horse's level of training with the result that the reader will not have to consult a separate book on longeing. The author makes it very clear that in his opinion there is no alternative to longeing with a cavesson. The section on working with long reins is a bit too short, especially since there is not a lot of written material available on that topic. Kottas describes individual topics clearly and to the point, does not digress or get mired

in details. Therefore the texts are very understandable and often clearly laid out in point form, making them easy to remember. This makes them approachable even for riders with little prior knowledge of (classical) dressage training. Very positive is the glossary in the appendix which explains important terms in a clear and simple way.

All chapters make the personal attitude clear this exceptional educator has towards his partner horse. Kottas-Heldenberg is of the opinion that the horse's wellbeing has to always come first. Despite this attitude he is a very sought after and successful trainer and judge even in the competitive dressage sport. Kottas-Heldenberg has no illusions when it comes to what a rider can possibly accomplish, and still encourages to never losing track of the path. In his final words he writes, "We have to admit that riding is a constant effort, and the top or goal can never be attained because neither the horse nor the rider is perfect. The fact that perfection will not be attained cannot mean that we should not strive for it, should not always try to improve our technical skills and understanding of the horse."

The author, Arthur Kottas-Heldenberg, entered the Spanish Court Riding School in 1960 as a trainee and rose through the strictly hierarchical training to the rank of first senior rider, which he held from 1995 to 2002 when he left the school. Co-author Julie Rowbotham is a long term student of Arthur Kottas-Heldenberg's and made it to Grand Prix level under his tutelage. She works as a trainer and rides in national and international competitions.

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