



Taking Up the Reins: A Year in Germany with a Dressage Master

Priscilla Endicott

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Twenty-five years ago, the European equestrian art of dressage took root in the United States. Since then, serious American riders dream of what it would be like to train abroad where dressage has been practiced for centuries. Taking Up the Reins finally gives readers a first-hand, behind-the-scenes look at what this training entails—and how such an experience, at once rigorous and beautiful, can change and illuminate one's life. In this personal memoir, Priscilla Endicott chronicles the intense year she spent in Germany studying the principles of dressage with master trainer, Walter Christensen. At age 50, the writer left husband, family, and home to study in a foreign land. In this book she shares insights based on a lifetime of riding knowledge, as well as a warm curiosity that embraces the many challenges of her new surroundings. While it combines a very human story of a woman's commitment to her search for excellence—the ups and downs of her leaning experience—just as importantly, it presents a colorful view of the remarkable world of international dressage and competition. Of primary importance are the relationships that affected the writer: her connection with her teacher, her horse, the apprentices, the riders, and other folk with whom she came into close contact. An inextricable part of the author's education was cultural. Through her eyes, we learn how the teaching of dressage and the German cultural spirit are mirror images, each reflecting the other. The book is rich in information although it is neither "technical" nor "instructional." The author's voice is original, honest, intimate, and spiced with humor. It is a voyage of discovery of many levels.

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