

# EAST MEETS WEST

**Dressage and reining pas-de-deux proves that a horse is a horse, no matter what the discipline**

by Colleen Archer

East met West at the Royal Winter Fair in Toronto last November when Gillian Sutherland and talented dressage horse Justin Tyme paired with 2007 National Reining Horse Association Reserve World Champion Harvey Stevens and his top reining horse, Peptoleap, in an unusual pas-de-deux. Delicate dance moves were paired with sliding stops; canter pirouettes with breathtaking spins.

The pas-de-deux was choreographed by Eva-Maria Pracht, winner of a team dressage bronze medal at the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Harvey praised the devotion of both women, saying that they "worked very hard to make the experience a good one for me, and lots of fun."

The act was also lots of fun for the audience, who showed their appreciation through enthusiastic clapping and cheering. Justin Tyme\*, who comes from the more reserved world of competitive dressage, took it all in stride.

The most amazing part of the pas-de-deux was when the riders switched horses. You would think they'd been practicing their alternate styles for years, but Harvey says, "We practiced about four times together, and I went to Gillian's one time to ride her horse with her help." Amazing!



M. Dunn photos

So how does western reining compare to dressage? "It wasn't difficult to switch," says Harvey, "because the other horse was very well trained and had a great willingness to work for me."

Harvey found the biggest challenges were the amount of bit pressure used in dressage, and the greater use of the rider's legs. Still, "There are a lot of similarities in the way we train, as well as what we expect from our horses in how they are to use their bodies. All in all, it was a learning experience for me, and a wake-up call that there are a lot of similar training methods. Working with a separate discipline, and finding that people have respect for other disciplines, was very rewarding."



Respect for other riding disciplines is something we should all have. Writes Chris Irwin about whether his clinics are for English or Western riding: "A horse is a horse. They don't care about the outfit worn or the type of tack used. They care about how they are spoken to by their human handler's body language. They care about consistency and predictability of appropriate behavior. They care about balance when they are ridden or driven and respect for their prey concerns when on the ground."

Says the Epona Equestrian Center in Spain, which offers dressage training to a very high level, "It is interesting that classical dressage and classical Western riding have a great deal in common, which is not surprising since they both come from the same Spanish roots."



Harmony in horsemanship should be the goal, no matter what the discipline. When both horse and rider are well balanced – physically, mentally and emotionally – the result can seem like magic!

\* In a sad turn of events, Justin Tyme, who is owned by Carol Ann Bartlett, was humanely destroyed in December due to a serious health issue. Says Gillian, "He was more than a competition horse to any of us. He touched everyone's lives."