

# THE ACADEMIC ART OF RIDING



Bent Branderup & Bianca Grön  
[www.bentbranderup.dk](http://www.bentbranderup.dk)  
Photos by Lotte Lekholm



## About Bent Branderup & Bianca Grön

*Bent was born in Denmark. He travelled around Europe to study different horse-cultures and now ended up in Denmark again, where he has his own farm.*

*Bent Branderup is the Grandmaster at the Knighthood of the Academic Art of Riding, which is an organisation with some of his students.*

*Bianca Grön was born in Germany. She studied for becoming a teacher in Flensburg, Germany. After finishing her exams, she decided to work as a riding instructor instead of teaching, since 2008 she is living in Denmark and working together with Bent Branderup.*

*Bianca Grön takes us on a journey  
to learn about the beauty of  
Classical Riding & Training at the  
Academic Art of Riding*

## Photos by Lotte Lekholm



The Academic Art of Riding is based on the knowledge of the old riding masters starting with Xenophon, Pluvinel, Guérinière, Newcastle and up to Steinbrecht.

Bent Branderup's goal is to bring back the knowledge of the old masters and to explain their work. Since years, he dedicated his time to the art of riding -an endless journey through the work of the old masters - and applying it with his own horses and students.

Bent Branderup's guideline "Two spirits must want to do what two bodies can" which means that he is not only training the horse physically, but also mentally.

The thoughtful use of gymnastic excersises should build up the horse and keep it healthy in both ways.

The Academic Art of Riding begins with the awareness of the horse as a worth being, a partner in life. The basic concept is to collect all information, and the use of different aids to build up a communication between the horse and the rider or trainer.

## Working with Favorito



This is Favorito after his arrival in February 2011 at our place in Denmark.

When I was giving him a little push with the lunge line without any metal noseband to stop him he was exploding forward because of the bad experiences in his past. He has experienced a lot of violence.

It took me months to start earning his trust, get him to listen to my body language. Now when I stop, he stops, and if I take my point of weight back he is getting calmer or collected. This is a good point to start from.

## Young Horse Training

The aim is to become physically and mentally connected to the horse in a way that would look like a dancing couple.

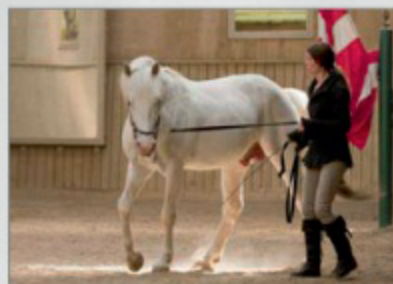
The rider has to take responsibility of the horse, in the same time, the horse has to have enough trust in the rider to accept the guidance.

We start by building a close friendship with the horse, starting from leading it with the halter. Also, it's very important to introduce the arena to the horse in a friendly way, we consider the horse as a student who is joining a new classroom.

We prepare the horse for riding by first lungeing it with a cavesson. The horse needs to find its balance without the rider or saddle on its back by stepping with its hind legs below its point of weight. Over this point we will also find our balance on the back of the horse when we start sitting on it in later sessions.

When the horse becomes able to bend its body to both sides equally we start to put a saddle on its back and see if it can stay in balance, move with suppleness without getting stiff in the back.

When the horse succeeds in going on with the saddle in all of the three gaits we start to put a person in the saddle to get the horse used to having a rider on its back, then we start to teach different riding aids.



By lungeing the horse we teach him the aids from ground. When the horse knows how to use its body we start to sit its back.

In the beginning, the rider just sit without using any aids or interrupting the horse in anyway.

Later on, he starts introducing the aids using the seat, the reins, and the whip in later stages.

When we start to ride, our goal shouldn't be just doing a piaffe or a flying change in canter, it should be building the horse physically and staying in communication with the horse during the time of riding.

For example, when a horse is doing a canter on the right lead, it's important to know how it should feel like and what are the correct aids for it.

If the horse isn't doing what we ask it to do then it might be not interested in what we are doing or it doesn't understand what we are asking. We have then to check our aids, and whether it's possible for the horse to do it or not. We have to consider many things before rushing into blaming the horse.

There is a quote that says "A lot of people talk to their horses, but not many listen."

Also, a very important citation by Bent Branderup "We are not using the horse for the dressage, we are using the dressage for the horse."

The Academic Art of Riding isn't only about the horse, it's also about building your body awareness in a way that can help you achieve your goals in riding.



My pony mare Maya doesn't have the power to have me on her back for a long time after she had an accident. I am just riding her very short in walk and after that I am doing handwork to make her more supple.

The school halt is a gymnastic for the hindlegs to lift the chest up, that the horse gets lighter in the front like in the collection, which makes the horse also more movable.

## *Introducing the collected walk*



In this session, I am teaching the horse how to do the collected walk. I am using the whip to lower the tail. If the horse trusts me and understands the aid it should put more weight back on the hindlegs and starts to lift up the chest.

The voice of the rider can motivate the horse to move with a bit more energy.

## *Bent Branderup doing the School Halt*



This is Bent Branderup with his Frederiksborg "Zarif" in the school halt. You can find this movement in the old copper prints and the descriptions in the books of the old masters.

The benefit is to move the weight of the horse backwards, that the horse is carrying more weight on the hindlegs, which are stronger than the frontlegs. It is a gymnastic for the muscles and ligaments and makes the horse stronger in the hind legs. In the Academic Art of Riding we train the horse to become a riding-horse that can carry the rider properly as the horse is not meant to carry weight on the chest.

## What is new for 2012?

In 2012 we are starting a Training System with "Bent Branderup © Trainer".

As more and more people became aware of the Academic Art of Riding, and to be able to meet such demand of interested people from all over the world, Bent and I developed the concept of "Bent Branderup © Trainer".

For this concept, Bent Branderup has chosen some members of the Knight-hood who are known for their passion for working with horses. They pay a special attention to their own continuous & advanced training, always looking for more future developments. Those are the ones who are qualified to teach people and call themselves "Bent Branderup © Trainer".

Their common ambition is to spread the Academic Art of Riding all over the world, to examine their own work, and to develop themselves together with Bent Branderup and the Academic Art of Riding.

