

BY JEFFREY WESTNEY

Here's the scene: It was the second Saturday afternoon of the month, a day when our driving club's active drivers train together (every month from May through October). For more than an hour, the trainer had helped each driver with his special problems. Now, with the 'official' portion over, the drivers were cooling their horses down, chatting and laughing with fellow members and just plain relaxing—and that is when it almost happened. One turnout came from the right, the other from the left . . . and almost instantly two horses were standing face to face at X, and two



Photo by Kerstin Weigel.

German young drivers keep their concentration during a sulky quadrille at a Horse Day Celebration in the small town of Roersdorf.

Try Quadrille for Fun and Learning



Photo by Britt Placzek.

Teams of German Heavy Warmblood stallions executing a quadrille.

drivers had very red faces!

Both horses and drivers were experienced enough to avoid a collision, but this close call was not taken lightly. When the horses were put away and we were relaxing with a “cool blondie” (German slang for a beer), there was quite a discussion about how to avoid such nerve tickles in the future.

One suggestion we decided to adopt was that we practice driving a Singles Quadrille. This type of driving is incredibly valuable in teaching horses to work in company, while at the same time teaching drivers to control their own animal as well as remaining cognizant of what others are doing—not to mention simply *learning to keep their eyes up*.

Our trainer agreed to help us get started with the planning.

Some of the learning goals we set:

- Develop the social behaviour of the horses;
- Regulate gaits and speed to coordinate with others;
- Perfect standard dressage figures.

Quadrille Tips

Selecting the drivers for a quadrille can be a delicate mission in diplomacy, as the quality of your results will be largely influenced by the least experienced driver. But this can be a wonderful exercise in teamwork, with the more advanced drivers helping the beginners become “just a little better!” It will help keep chaos to a minimum if you limit the number of drivers to six. You can increase the number as you get better.

Most of the work of creating the routine for your Singles Quadrille has already been done for you—by your ADS! The American Driving Society Rulebook (Part V, Section 3 – Dressage Test) provides an ample selection of movements, complete with diagrams from which you can create your own quadrille. When selecting the movements for your quadrille, be sure to take the skill levels of the participating drivers into consideration. Keep it simple at the beginning: use only one gait—the working trot—and try not to exceed

It All Started With Horses

Starting in the 17th Century, the term quadrille described four horsemen within military parades performing certain movements from the four corners of a square. This performance was so popular that around 1740 it became common to replace the horse with a second person and perform it without the horses. In the course of time it evolved into an intricate dance. In the early 1800s a lady known as Miss Berry is credited with introducing the dance into England, where it quickly caught on with the upper classes and was considered very “smart”!

America’s western pioneers actually danced the quadrille while crossing the Great Plains: the quadrille formed the basis for the American square dance, which to this day enjoys immense popularity around the world.

Although the human quadrille dance was developing rapidly, the equestrian quadrille was also growing in popularity and was common entertainment at military demonstrations and celebrations. It did not take the military long to recognize this entertainment’s enormous additional benefit: training of horse and rider/driver in social behaviour, as well as precision movements in a group.

Here in Germany the driven quadrille is an important part of the show programs at all the major “Stud Shows.” It is breathtaking to watch four six-in-hand teams, or eight tandems, always comprised of breeding stallions, going through their paces each year in Celle, Neu Stadt on der Dosse or Moritzburg.



Photo by Jeffrey Westney



How it all starts: Two of Jeffrey Westney's students practice meeting and passing at X in the arena.



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a total length of four to six minutes. Until your group establishes some confidence and routine, six minutes can seem like an eternity!

Unlike the driven dressage test with its mandatory figures, the driven quadrille's design is limited only to the skills of horse and driver and can be a rewarding experience in creativity. Once you have somewhat perfected the driving patterns of your quadrille, you can upgrade the performance by striving to achieve the goals set out in article 114, a-d of the ADS Rulebook, in short "... in rhythm while accepting the bit with relaxation." With so many drivers at one time, it is easier said than done, but well worth the effort.

From my own experience, here are some ideas that just might smooth your group's entry into the world of driving a quadrille.

- While in the early planning stages of your quadrille "...let your fingers do the walking." Use a drawing of a dressage arena complete with letters and trace the movements with your fingers. This is a good time to discuss the dressage movements you have selected and how they are to be executed.
- Move out to the actual arena (still without horses or carriages) and *walk the quadrille*. Pay special attention to the precise execution of each movement, how the turnouts will come together and at which point.
- When beginning to practice with actual horses, *each figure should be driven solo by every driver*, and later by each pair of drivers. When they have the

dressage figures down pat, pairs of turnouts can drive the entire quadrille, which of course then becomes a driven *pas de deux*. (Training in this manner also enables you to practice solo or in pairs without the entire group being present.)

- Plan your “line up” carefully. Things will go more smoothly if the horses with the most movement (longer stride) are in the lead. The two lead horses set the pace, and it is easier to speed up slower horses than to hold back real striders.
- Once the two lead horses have set the pace, the following drivers must **always maintain an agreed upon distance**, say two meters, to (from) the rig in front of them, thus eliminating the need of constantly looking across the arena (instead of straight ahead) to see if you are level with your partner.



Photo by Mira Keller.

German Heavy Warmblood stallions perform in a quadrille at the annual Saxon Breeding Stallion Show.

- When selecting background music for your quadrille, take into consideration the general “mood” of your group. Good snappy music picks up the mood of the spectators as well as the drivers and makes small

mistakes less noticeable.

All there is to do now is put on the music, turn up the volume and let the fun begin!

Find a simple movement-by-movement quadrille plan at www.american-drivingsociety.org. 🍀

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