

# Renata Schibler

## INTERVIEW

by Claudia Darius ■ photos by Nicoletta Abelli, Irina Filsinger



### **How did your passion for Arabian horses get its start?**

*When I was a child, I liked to read horse books and collected horse photos. My room was hung with horse posters. Of course, Arabian horses were my favourites. I had my first riding experiences as a small girl, on a partbred pony, and in the mid-70ies, I was allowed to start the horses of a breeder of purebred Arabians. That's when the "arabitis" virus got a hold on me.*

### **At that time, did you have an inkling or maybe a hope of the important part these horses would one day take in your life, and were there early aims you had even then?**

*Even when I was a small girl, I dreamed of owning an Arabian horse, and at the end of the 1970ies, I became the proud owner of my first Arabian stallion. A short time later, I acquired a filly, EICKA, and when she scored high at the Salon du Cheval in Paris, I started to dream breeders' dreams.*

*I decided to take a break from work and went to England for 6 months in order to get some experience, working on three different Arabian studs. The idea of breeding had taken root in me.*

### **Which were the horses who put their mark on your private life in the past?**

*Of course, there is my mare EICKA who holds great importance for me. She was the core of our breeding activities. Eicka's dam Etica was imported from Spain by the Merz family (Om El Arab), together with Estopa. Etica was a 6/8 sibling of world famous Estopa, which means*

*Eicka was Spanish-bred for her one half, and tailed back to Marbach breeding via Salem (out of Sahmet) for her other half.*

*This mare's special quality was her versatility. On the one hand, she was a highly successful show horse, winning a lot of Championship titles internationally. On the other hand, she was a highly successful broodmare, giving us a number of high quality offspring. In addition – and that's something that has always been highly important to us in our breeding – she was a very reliable riding horse. She loved show jumping and foxhunting and made her mark in these disciplines as well, always being ahead by one nose.*

### **You have been an internationally acknowledged judge for years and are much in demand. What was your first show, and what has changed in showing until today, in your opinion?**

*In 1992, the Acqui Terme show in Italy was the first show I had the chance to judge. At that time, most shows were small and the atmosphere was quite familiar. The horse owners would often train and handle their horses themselves, and everything was much more relaxed.*

*Today, it seems to be almost unthinkable not to use the services of a professional trainer. More often than not, the horses spend several months at some training centre at considerable cost. Show scores today have increasing influence on promo-*



# Renata Schibler

## INTERVIEW

ting sales. Many more horses are sold to the Middle East and Overseas nowadays.

**What's the criterion that's most difficult to judge, in your opinion?**

*If the ground is uneven and deep, judging the hooves is not easy. A firm and level spot for that would be advantageous.*

*Classes with a small number of horses and fairly homogeneous quality are often quite hard to judge.*

*Personally, I like to give half-point scores, as is normal for A shows. I have more of a chance to differentiate, that way.*

*And finally, it's easier to judge good horses than faulty ones.*

**What's the role of your fellow judges during a show, for you?**

*As judges, we have a task that's high in responsibility. That's why, in our team of judges, mutual respect for different opinions as well as my own independent judgement are highly important for me.*

**Will you please describe for our readers your way of working as a judge? The class starts, and the horses enter the ring...**

*As soon as all the horses are in the ring, I try to get an estimate of the level of quality in that class. The first impression goes a long way for the final score. I watch the walk and try to register special characteristics of individual horses. During the individual presentation, I watch out for the details such as head, eyes, correct legs, and movements.*

**What is your opinion on the different systems of judging, and do you have explicit recommendations for improvements?**

*To my mind, the points system is much more transparent than the comparative system. With the points system, owners can much more easily understand the weaknesses and*

*strengths of their horse, and why a particular horse won or not.*

*With the comparative system, you need particularly good judges with a lot of experience, because otherwise, you may have a pretty horse as the winner just because somebody forgot to take the conformational faults into consideration. However, our points system does have its disadvantages, too. The five criteria, used without a coefficient, are mainly in favour of a good conformation.*

*Judges who wish to give their preference to the typey horse instead of the correct one are forced to be quite careful about allotting "technical" points in order to make it possible for the typey horse to win.*

*That's quite confusing for spectators and owners, of course, particularly if at the same time, the typey horse obtains higher scores without having earned them.*

*I would like to propose introducing a higher coefficient for the score for type.*

*Another consideration might be a separation of the head score and the neck score.*

*In addition, the scale of scores available to judges should be used in its lower reaches as well.*

**Would you give us 5 horses who registered a special impression with you on European shows during recent years?**

*The quality of Arabian horses has steadily increased in recent years, ever more approaching the ideal. That way, I had the opportunity to meet many wonderful horses who won my heart. To name a few to stand for all of these noble creatures, I would like to mention the mare Pianissima and the stallion Al Lahab, as they were those who especially enchanted me.*

**What is, for you, the development Arabian horses experienced in recent years?**

*During recent years, you can observe that horse quality on shows is on a steady rise. Besides, there were different fashion styles to be noted.*



Renata Schibler - Porto S.Elpidio 2007.



Renata Schibler mentre giudica al Campionato Europeo, Verona 2007.

***What are your visions for the future?***

*I have this wonderful image in my mind that Arabian horses are not only seen as noble creatures, but just as importantly, they receive their well-earned appreciation as outstanding utility horses.*

***Lately, professional show trainers and the methods of training for shows have been in the focus of criticism. What are your experiences in this matter?***

*Up to now, I have no personal observation of horses being treated forcefully in the show ring, but I did note some obviously intimidated horses.*

*If, in the future, there is an increasing number of observations hinting at forceful treatment of show horses that is not justified, all of us are called upon to take*

*steps against this development. Show trainers certainly are under pressure to achieve successes, but this does not justify force. We will definitely need to watch future developments closely.*

***What is the advice you would give to a newcomer in the Arabian scene?***

*A young breeder should be aware that the indispensable ingredients for success are effort, passion, and dedication, as well as perseverance and determination. What you need besides is intuition, and the ability to do self-criticism. With all of these, never forget that you took responsibility for living beings: horses.*

*And a general adage: better keep a single good mare than five mediocre ones. □*

***Some Basic Data:***

- *Born in Zurich in 1957, grown up in Basel.*
- *Raised speaking Swiss German as well as Italian. Later on, university studies in French, Spanish, and English.*
- *2 daughters (Sandra 1984, Claudia 1987). Sandra has just concluded her university courses of Marine Biology in the US. Claudia is getting management training, also abroad.*
- *Widowed since 1999.*
- *Passionate horse jumper.*
- *Further hobbies include: sports in general, skiing in winter, and in summer (if time allows, what with travelling widely as a judge) golfing, tennis, sailing, jogging, travelling, and reading.*
- *In 1993, founding ARABIAN FUTURE SCHWEIZ together with Wolfgang Eberhardt.*
- *1993 – 2003 member of the chairboard of SZAP (Swiss Breeding Association for Arabian Horses).*
- *1999 – 2003 secretary of SZAP.*