



This interview had first been published in the German magazine „Feine Hilfen“ (February / March 2019 issue).

**Feine Hilfen:** Mr. Carde, your latest book has just been published by Olms. Can you reveal us what it is about?

**C. Carde:** It is a book which I have written together with Silke Rottermann and which consists of three parts. Like the title „Dressage between Tradition and Modernity“ already indicates, we have tried to talk about riding after the German and after the French tradition, have studied the German and the French masters and then changed to the present. We aimed to create a historical background in this first part in which we also speak about my own equestrian biography. The second and most extensive part is dedicated to my practical approach and which different aspects I consider

important for a modern equitation on a classical basis: Work in hand, at the lunge and under the saddle. The third part is a compilation of articles which I have written for magazines or for lectures during clinics. In principle they all thematize the main topic of the book: How has dressage sport developed from its beginnings into our days, with which problems does it deal and why I still consider the sport important. But there’s also a short, so far unpublished, letter exchange between Jean-Claude Racinet and me in this book.

**„Riding After the French Tradition is perceived differently.“**

**Feine Hilfen:** For this issue of FEINE HILFEN magazine I did a lot of research and that way found your book. In it you mention that the „Riding after the French Tradition“ is inscribed in the intangible list of the UNESCO World Heritage, but that a precise definition of this term is lacking. This causes a stir in France for quite some time now. What is your opinion?

**C. Carde:** You know, we French are great theoreticians. We have many ideas, but because we are also individualists, that’s why „Riding after the French Tradition“ is perceived so differently. Everybody is agreeing on our classical basis which descends from the Renaissance, with our riding masters de la Broue and Pluvinel. A bit later de la Guérinière followed. They took care that we have a classical socket. In the 17th and 18th century there had been the School of Versailles—a great moment in the history of French equitation. Some contemporaries have a certain nostalgia for this period which was brilliant for sure. But there are only few direct testimonies from this time because the riding masters of Versailles did not write anything down themselves. The only one who did about that time, but worked in Paris and not in Versailles, had been de la Guérinière. He wrote the master-piece „Ecole de Cavalerie“. In 1750 the military school in Paris had been founded for military reasons with Dauvergne as écuyer en chef. That way a stream emerged which traces we found again in Saumur at the beginning of the 19th century. France now got into an epoch which was not very advantageous for equestrian art. We are

talking about the time of the revolution and the empire. The French Revolution shattered my country in all spheres of life indeed. For equitation this epoch had been a break with Versailles—that school did practically not survive the revolution. Although it had been rebuilt at the beginning of the 19th century, it had to close its doors forever again already in 1830. Today we have people whose opinion is that the roots of „Riding in the French Tradition“ are in the Italian Renaissance, that it had been continued by the riding masters I mentioned earlier and that it continues in the Baucherism. The riders of the Cadre Noir developed an equitation on a classical basis in the 19th and 20th century which is positioned halfway between sport and pure equestrian art. The riders adapted themselves to the sport, for example in regards of the forward position in jumping after Caprilli. They practiced at the same time academic dressage and equestrian sport. The peculiarity of Saumur had been this combination of sport and art. In the 20th century this kind of Saumur stream spread throughout the country. The officers and non commissioned officers often continued their work in riding stables after they had finished their military career. That way they so to say created the frame for the development of equestrian centers in France in the second half of the 20th century after the Second World War. I myself had been trained in this stream. And this Saumur stream is in my opinion the main line if one is approaching this topic from an artistic and sportive point of view.

The Baucherist line on the other hand is focusing almost entirely on equestrian art. Only one rider who died 2006, Jean d'Orgeix, relied on Baucherism as his training method which he applied to train horses and riders for jumping sport.

**„If we want to assess equitation clearly, we have to agree about the goal to achieve“**

**Feine Hilfen:** Even after having talked to many people about it, I still consider the subject as pretty complex.

**C. Carde:** No, it is not complex. These two streams are the main streams in my country. But nowadays you find several people who have developed their own training practices. The social networks and the equestrian press spread these methods. My contemporary Philippe Karl has developed his School of Lightness. It is a kind of equitation which is typical of him, but is not completely aligned with the equitation in Saumur. But his approach defends, just like Saumur, lightness. There are also artists like Jean-Luc Cornille who has developed a different approach, „Science of Motion“, which differs strongly from Saumur, even though he refers there. The French individualists indeed complicate the matter a bit.

**Feine Hilfen:** During my researches in France I found the Baucherism, a show stream, a sportive stream. What I missed was an academic stream which returns to the School of Versailles—a kind of equitation we still find nowadays in Vienna or in Lisbon. This form of equestrian art came from France, but it seems to have completely disappeared from there since the end of the Empire.

**C. Carde:** French equitation shone through the „École de Cavalerie“ in Saumur. For many years Saumur had trained, practically until the middle of the last century, numerous officers from other countries, from Japan to the USA. The Swedish Henri St. Cyr who was twice double Olympic dressage champion, came to Saumur for training. It is not surprising that this approach has left traces everywhere and that others perhaps followed this example.

I think that if we want to assess equitation clearly and want to be sure we speak about the same, then we have to agree about the goal to achieve. It is the same for life in general. Regarding horses it is like that: If I want to be successful in endurance riding, I will not choose an Iberian horse. It is the same for jumping. But if I want to ride dressage, then one might have a stronger

interest to orientate oneself to these horses which are so much easier to collect than German, French or other warmbloods. In France we have many riders like Dany Lahaye who are neither interested in sportive aspects of equitation, nor competitions. And they even take less interest because one has to admit that the recent riding in competitions which is supposed to show us the summit of equestrian art, instead presents something which is rather orientated towards the spectacular and sportive performance than towards equestrian art. Apart from that it is known that some riders who won for a certain time and are still successful, use training methods which are based on force. We know this all and it takes care that people who are interested in equestrian art, have no interest to partake in equestrian sport.

There is a „rupture“ between competition riding and those who do not want this kind of equitation, although it makes some gorgeous horses present themselves impressively. These people are looking for something much more refined, something artistic and more enriching for horse and rider.

**Feine Hilfen:** Yes, I think this is also one of the reasons for the development we have in Germany.

**C. Carde:** Yes, and this is the reason why such developments can also be seen in other countries. I believe that for example Philippe Karl has founded the School of Lightness for that reason.

### **„Some of the riding philosophies which are developing currently are conducted like closed societies“**

**Feine Hilfen:** When you were an international judge you had to face a very negative experience at the CDI Moscow in 2000. You judged there and your result was a completely different one than that of the other judges. As a consequence you had not been invited back. Don't you think that a system is wrong which excludes somebody who had not judged like requested?

**C. Carde:** I am apparently a special case (laughs). I am one of few riders who trained horses to Olympic dressage level, had been FEI judge, but also competed nationally at the highest level of jumping and eventing. I also rode races. I am aware that there are principles which are valid for all equestrian disciplines and which apply to all horses. And I always tried to keep an as holistic view as possible on equitation, whereas many of the riding philosophies which are developing currently are conducted like closed societies, with a lack of culture, air to breathe and no mental flexibility. I think that thanks to my wide equestrian experience I was able to observe equitation well and to assess what is sport, what is art, what is in the interest of the horse and what constitutes equitation.

That all this was not very much sought after in judging, says enough about this system in which judges are still invited. And it partly explains why international dressage sport is confronted with certain problems from which it is hard to get away again if there is no fundamental change (not many within the system are interested in that though). After Moscow I decided for myself not to judge anymore, because I do not have the impression that the rules are applied strictly enough.

### **„It always needs to be made sure that innovation does not act against the integrity of the horse“**

**Feine Hilfen:** It is interesting that all developments since the Revolution are based on the wish of the French to be innovative: technically, scientifically... Jean-Paul Lardy, the rider of the Cadre Noir with whom I talked for an article, said to me that he considers one task of the Cadre Noir to be especially innovative. To be innovative and to keep traditions seems very difficult to me, but it also seems to be nothing new.

**C. Carde:** It is very fashionable at the moment to say „We have to move forwards and at the same time we are looking into the rearview mirror“. But the French also says: „Don't let the prey run away for a shadow“. Hence is it important that the

classical basis does not get lost. It is easily said and one has to put it into practise. And regarding innovation it always has to be made sure that it does not act against the integrity of the horse, but in contrary serves its development. And as sad as it is to mention it excludes too often the recent dressage competitions. At the time I had been in the Cadre Noir I told my riders to be as successful as possible in dressage competitions. But at that time the sport had still been a competition with true values. It was the epoch of Dr. Reiner Klimke. At that time I was on a team with Dominique Flament, Dominique d'Esmé and Patrick Le Rolland which came 2nd in the Nations Cup at Aachen behind the Germans. International success made our work credible and gave us an ambitious goal that was to combine sport and art in the best possible way. However, I do not know how the Cadre Noir of our days is orientated. In my opinion it cannot see dressage sport at the highest level as the ideal goal because of the deviations which it has caused.

The shows of the Cadre Noir, thanks to the music, the light and the general developments, work very well and are very successful. But is the Cadre Noir a show troop or does it need to be, like many believe, a group of good riders which transmits the principles of classical equitation and good methods which allow to develop equitation on the basis of handed down values? A difficult, but essential role.

**Feine Hilfen:** Which are the principles of French traditional riding in your opinion?

**C. Carde:** They are principles of doing and the according philosophy. From L'Hotte we get three recommendations: Calm, forward, straight. I add: To act with patience, tact and gentleness. The teaching philosophy should mainly consist of:

- To make oneself understood to the horse and let it execute.
- To be content with little, ask often, praise much.
- To be aware that every badly done exercise is not only useless, but harmful.

Some of these directives are inspired by the work of General Decarpentry. He was a remarkable person. It was a time I myself did not know because I was too young, but I would have loved to have known it. It was in the middle of the previous century when the two generals, Decarpentry from France and von Holzing-Berstett from Germany, wrote the general directives of the dressage rule-book of the FEI. I think it is marvelous that two men, highly valued officers in their own countries, agreed on a definition about a common way of riding. I will continue being faithful to General Decarpentry who had also written remarkable books about equitation and in particular about dressage.

**„The contact between the hand and the mouth is like the hand of an adult who takes a small child to cross the street“**

**Feine Hilfen:** You founded together with Jean d'Orgeix and Michel Henriquet the association „Allege Ideal“ because you recognized that equitation was losing lightness. Could you give us your definition of this term and tell us why you founded this association?

**C. Carde:** It is possible to explain lightness schematically, which means approximately. One can say it is the possibility of the rider to achieve the horse's obedience with the lightest of aids. This obedience of the horse to the slightest of leg-, rein-, the weight- and also the voice aids can be defined as lightness. But this term is closely related to the one of balance. It is important that the horse is always put in the best possible balance so that it is able to show the most noble attitude possible for him which allows the horse to move visibly effortless. Lightness and balance always need to be worked on together, no matter in which discipline. And d'Orgeix thought that lightness was missing in dressage competitions. You only have to look at the competitions at the highest level: The relation between the hand of the riders and the mouth of the horse is often tense and rigorous. This is no relation based on

trust, instead one which is accepted, but forced. Und this is maybe the common denominator of the equestrian disciplines. In jumping you cannot ride towards a fence with ten kilo in each hand—the horse would stop.

**Feine Hilfen:** Yes, and still you see exactly that and it is taught like it, too. Like to push the horse forward with seat and legs—this is also something one see often.

**C. Carde:** Yes, but we always have to ride the horse forwards with a hand that accompanies the horse and does not restrict it. And this is surely wrongly understood. The idea of contact—the connection between a rider's hand and the horse's mouth—is the one which is the most wrongly interpreted of all. It is perhaps the most difficult question which is hardly ever treated in seminars or clinics. The contact between the hand and the mouth is like the hand of an adult who takes a small child to cross the street: trusting, soft, relaxed, precise and faithful. The topic of contact plays an extensive role in the practical part of my new book and I have tried to show it in all its aspects.

**Feine Hilfe:** The seat of the rider is also often neglected in our days.

**C. Carde:** Yes, because we do not invest enough time anymore. During my military training in Saumur more than 50 years ago we had to ride 3 months without stirrups. At the end of this period one either had a good seat (laughs) or it had been a wasted effort.

**Agnes Trosse of „Feine Hilfen“ magazine interviewed Colonel Carde in February 2019.**

**ONLINE-BONUS**  
**Christian Carde**  
im GESPRÄCH

Christian Carde (rechts), ehemaliger Ecuyer en Chef des Cadre Noir, hat gemeinsam mit der Journalistin Silke Rottemann (links) ein Buch geschrieben, das im Januar im Olms Verlag erschien.

Heute erscheint die Ausgabe 33 der FEINE HILFEN. Dieses Mal geht es um Reiten und Reitkunst in Frankreich. Wir wagen einen Blick über den Tellerrand unseres eigenen Landes und lassen die Franzosen selbst erzählen, über was sie sich Gedanken machen und wie sie die Reitkunst im eigenen Land wahrnehmen. Da passt es auch, dass gerade jetzt das neue Buch von Christian Carde und Silke Rottemann erschienen, das sich mit der Reiterei französischer Tradition befasst.

**Christian Carde** war Ecuyer en chef des Cadre Noir von Saumur. Wir befragten ihn für unsere Leser zum Buch und zur französischen Reitkultur.

**INTERVIEW** AGNES TROSSE | **ÜBERSETZUNG:** AGNES TROSSE

**FEINE HILFEN** Herr Carde, gerade ist von Ihnen ein neues Buch im OLMS-Verlag erschienen. Möchten Sie uns erzählen, warum es darin geht?

Christian Carde: Es handelt sich um ein Buch, das ich gemeinsam mit Silke Rottemann geschrieben habe und das praktisch niemandem beschriftet ist. Wie die Titel schon sagt, Distanzieren: Zwischen Tradition und Moderne, haben wir versucht, über eine Reitertradition zu sprechen und über eine Reitertradition zu sprechen, haben uns mit den deutschen und den französischen Meistern beschäftigt und sind