

# Quadrille Reunites Lusitanos



Leah Winston on Amintas Interagro  
Photo by Marilyn Fallon

By Susan Rose Marcus

Envision eight gray Lusitanos gliding across a wide arena to lively Brazilian music. That thought was behind the invitation made by Interagro Farms to select buyers from 2005 to 2009 to perform during the third annual Showcase Reception. Now, eight Lusitano owners from Georgia to Massachusetts are preparing their horses - four stallions, three geldings and one mare - to delight an international audience with a feature quadrille performance on Friday evening, February 26, at The 2010 Lusitano Collection™ International Horse Auction at The Jim Brandon Equestrian Center in West Palm Beach, Florida. Riders and horses will arrive in South Florida months or even weeks prior to the event.

"I'm not worried," says Heather Bender, director of the quadrille who is also the Director of USA Training - Interagro Farm Export Program and the professional who helps select horses for the auction. "I know all the riders and their skill levels. They are up to this challenge and will do a great job." Heather will start with a basic riding plan, but will finalize the movements as they practice. "Because of their ages, the horses are at various levels of development, but they are so well matched in body type and color. The audience will see them moving in sequence and in unison. Some will piaffe, do half passes and flying changes, but the real beauty in a quadrille occurs when the horses are in sync, a necessity when 'threading the needle' in perfect harmony across the arena, an audience favorite."

Growing up on Interagro Farms, the horses were groomed in open cross ties and were ridden side by side in large groups which helped them become better socialized. Heather comments, "Because they are used to working closely together, this has made putting a quadrille together an easier project."

Three of the owners, all dressage competitors, are riding their own horses while Heather and four additional trainers are riding the other horses. Heather and trainer

Leah Winston ride at the same barn while most of the others haven't ridden together. Six have some experience riding in quadrilles, but first-timer grand prix rider/trainer Tim Mellott offered, "It will be a good experience. Everyone I see who does it seems to have a great time." Pia Aragão, a Swedish-born international rider and twice-Brazilian dressage champion who works as a trainer on Interagro Farms, is riding the horse she once successfully competed in Brazil before he was exported and sold in The Collection.

Having served as a member of the USDF quadrille committee and as a qualified quadrille judge, Heather has performed and written about quadrille performances for a number of years. This past March, she was a member of the winning international quadrille team in the Challenge of the Americas Competition in Wellington, Florida. She clarified the process, "When you are working with music and eight different riders and horses, sometimes the movements may go faster or take longer. We have to be able to deal with the changes. Most importantly we try to select choreography that enhances the horses' abilities."

Until all of the riders and horses are in South Florida, those who are there will rehearse aspects of the quadrille. In reality, according to Heather, the performance won't be finalized until the final two weeks. She added, "We may have to add a few bars to the music. It all depends on the timing. That's where the creativity comes in." Interagro Farm Managing Director Cecilia Gonzaga and her husband, Christiano Rainer are assisting with the music. Cecilia said, "I've known these horses their whole lives. I'm so excited with the prospect of getting these alumni horses together again."

The participants are: Heather Bender riding stallion Zairo Interagro owned by Priscilla Baldwin and Heather Bender; Leah Winston riding stallion Amintas Interagro owned by Sheri and Al Zobec; Pia Aragão riding gelding Xenocrates Interagro owned by Millie McCoy; Timothy Mellott riding gelding Acorde Interagro owned by Timothy and Charan Ireland; Stephany Fish riding mare Zalene Interagro owned by Kathryn Elliott; Kate Tremair riding her stallion Zenith Interagro; Liza Karsai riding her stallion Aclamado Interagro; and Barbara Masterson riding her gelding Velasco Interagro.