

## Gribaldi: A Beautiful Black Stallion

**The Dutch have never been reluctant to venture abroad in search of blood to improve KWPN breeding. This is the mindset that led to Gribaldi's move to the Netherlands, where, at age four, he first participated in the Stallion Show at the Van Uytert equestrian center in Heerwaarden. As Gribaldi entered the show ring that day, the audience let out a collective "ooohhh" from the stands and stood up to get a better view of the beautiful black stallion fit for a king. That moment marked the start of high expectations for Gribaldi offspring - expectations that have certainly been met, for Gribaldi is not only the sire of many very talented dressage horses but also an international Grand Prix dressage competitor with rider Edward Gal.**

This is the story of Gribaldi, and it begins with Marika and Reimund Werner in Mittenaar, Germany. Marika is a long-time Trakehner enthusiast. She explains: "In 1988, Reimund and I bought Gondola II, who was 16 at the time, as a schoolmaster for our son. Unfortunately, he outgrew the mare quickly, so we decided to use her for breeding. Gondola was very friendly and a beautiful black mare. Her only disadvantage was her small size because she was a twin. Because of her size, we decided to breed her to Kostolany. He was our first choice because he was big with a lot of presence and had a very good temperament. And like Gondola, he too had Ibikus blood - whom I considered the ideal sport horse - so I wanted those genes to be passed on.

"We got a total of four Kostolany foals out of Gondola. The first, Gaston, was sold as a sport horse to an Austrian buyer. The second, Georgina III, was the best three-year-old mare at the Grading in Hessen; we kept her as a broodmare. Gribaldi followed Georgina a year later. We filmed his birth and the first half-hour of his life, and we still watch the film regularly. He was born on a Sunday evening, a true 'Sunday's child.' It wasn't long before we knew he was a quality horse, but we had decided in advance to sell him because we couldn't keep a stallion. We did, however, keep his dam Gondola until she died. She was 31 at the time and boss of the herd until the end."



*Gribaldi is the sire of many talented dressage horses.*

## The Black Stallion Grows Up

A buyer was waiting for Gribaldi even before he was born. Otto Langels of the Hämelschenburg equestrian center in Emmerthal had told Marika to call him if Gondola ever threw a colt. He would come see it right away. Marika: "I called Otto, and he was immediately enthusiastic about Gribaldi, so he bought him. When Gribaldi was two, he was presented at the young horse selection, and we went to see him. At the time, he was temporarily stabled in his sire Kostolany's stall, and I'll never forget what I saw: Gribaldi had become so big and handsome. Otto was planning to take him to the Neumünster selection, and after seeing him at the young horse selection, I had total faith in Gribaldi. At the Neumünster pre-selection, we met Joop van Uytert, Gribaldi's new owner. Soon after he won Sieger Stallion in Neumünster, Joop took him to the Netherlands. The next time we saw him was at the performance test. After Gribaldi successfully completed the test, Joop brought him and us to Heerewaarden, where his first mares were already waiting for him. At that moment, I was very proud that Dutch breeders, whom I generally consider very keen, were so eager to use him. We try to attend the stallion show in Heerewaarden each year, and we still enjoy the audience's reaction when Gribaldi enters the ring. He has given us so many wonderful moments, like when we witnessed his birth; when we saw him in his sire's stall; and when he won and became approved in Neumünster. That last event, in particular, was very special because we're



The keur stallion Gribaldi and Edward Gal have enjoyed many Grand Prix wins.

just small-time, relatively unknown breeders, yet we bred a horse that is both an approved stallion and a champion."

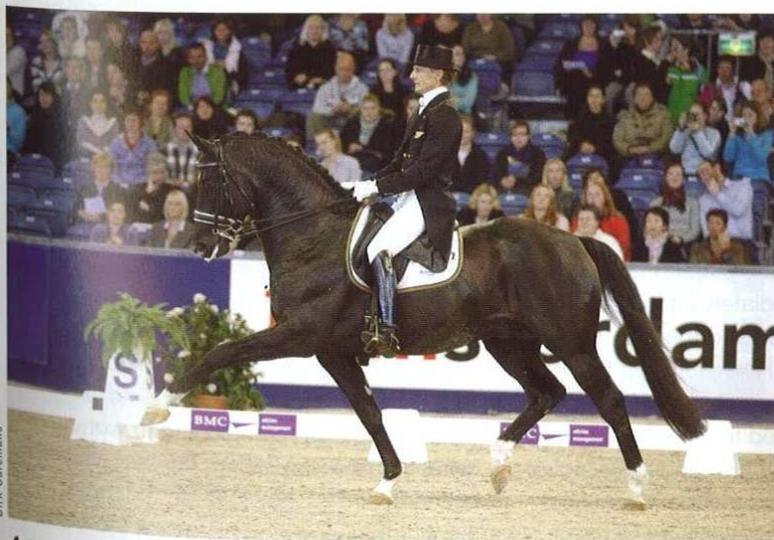
## Recognizing Quality is an Art

The first time that Otto Langels saw Gribaldi, the stallion was only a few days old. Langels: "I was enthusiastic about him from the first time I saw him in his stall. He was like a picture: black with really long legs and very clear eyes. But not everyone recognized Gribaldi's quality because he barely scored a seven for movement in his foal evaluation, even though it was worthy of a nine. Of course, recognizing quality is an art; I buy a good number of foals every year and have learned a lot that way. But I can be wrong too! Prior to the Neumünster selection, I agreed to sell Gribaldi to Joop van Uytert and Rinus de Jong. Of course, the decision was a painful one, but if you breed or buy horses, you have to regularly sell them too."

"A year later, I bought Gribaldi's full brother, Gambaretty, from the Werner family. He was also a very handsome horse but didn't grow very tall, so I eventually sold him as a sport horse to someone in Switzerland."

## A Visit with Major Consequences

In October of 1995, the first crop of Partout foals was to be presented in Neumünster. Given Van Uytert's interest in Partout, he decided to drive to Germany to see the stallion's offspring. On his way to Neumünster, he stopped by Langels' place as he had a Partout foal that was selected for Neumünster. That decision would change Van Uytert's entire life. In addition to the Partout foal, Langels had a 2 1/2-year-old black stallion in his barn, Gribaldi. Van Uytert: "I was immediately taken with him; he had exceptionally beautiful conformation. His movement was great, off the ground and very supple. That was the first time I saw Gribaldi. Over the course of



A real eye-catcher, Totilas (s.Gribaldi) is Edward Gal's future top horse.



In 2003, Sister de Jeu elite (s.Gribaldi) won Champion of the keur/elite mares at the National Mare Selection. She and Edward Gal are currently part of the dressage A-team.

Dirk Caremans

Dirk Caremans



In 2008, the KWPN stallion Painted Black and Anky van Grunsven scored seven international Grand Prix wins.

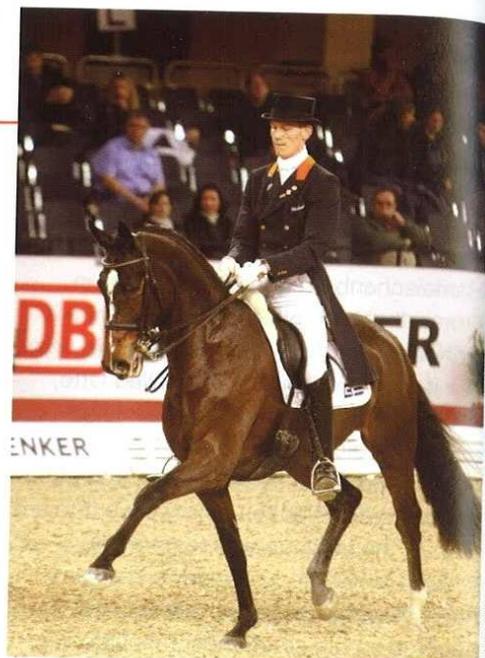
conversation, I asked Otto if he wanted to sell him, but he wasn't interested. When I arrived back home, I couldn't stop thinking about Gribaldi. In those days, I did a lot of business with Rinus de Jong, and one Saturday afternoon, we drove to Emmerthal. When Rinus saw Gribaldi, he said, 'We're not going home until we buy that stallion.' But that wasn't easy; first, we had to carefully view all the horses in the barn, and after a great deal of discussion, we finally sat down to write a contract at 9:00 o'clock that evening. However, the contract

included a provision for the Neumünster auction."

The October Neumünster selection began on a Thursday, and after Gribaldi's round over hard ground, he was certain to become Champion. Van Uytert: "Everyone was impressed by him: his presence, movement, he lacked nothing. The auction followed the selection, and the three of us - Otto, Rinus, and I - agreed that if someone else bid an amount over what Rinus and I were willing to pay for Gribaldi, we would void our original contract and divide the final bid amount between Otto and us. Fortunately, no one bid higher, so Gribaldi was ours. We brought him home that evening but with mixed feelings about the gamble we took. On the one hand, we were incredibly enthusiastic about Gribaldi, but on the other hand, thoughts ran through our heads like, 'Now we have an expensive and special horse, but will things turn out well?' On top of that, we discovered that there were no radiographs of Gribaldi's knees, although we had all the other necessary radiographs. Because the KWPN requires knees to be radiographed, we were nervous about what the new images would reveal. Fortunately, Gribaldi's knees were totally fine, so we immediately registered him for the additional KWPN inspections in December. At the first round viewing in Ermelo, he immediately impressed the Selection Committee and therefore advanced to Den Bosch. However, as a foreign stallion, he was not eligible to win Champion, but he still piqued the interest of many breeders because of his handsome looks, good movement, and unique bloodlines. After Den Bosch, Gribaldi went to the performance test in Ermelo."

## Smart stallion

Edward Gal first noticed Gribaldi at the Trakehner Show in Ermelo. Gal: "He was three years old at the time and shown by Anne van Uytert. Gribaldi really got my attention; his movement was so supple. When Joop asked me if I wanted to ride him, I considered it the opportunity of a lifetime. Eventually Gribaldi was sent to our facility in De Harskamp, which made training him easier. He's very quiet in his stall; we hardly ever hear him. And he's the same at shows. However, he does think he's the emperor of the barn and expects to be treated as such. Besides that, he's a very keen and smart horse. And because he's smart, he learns movements very easily, but when he occasionally doesn't understand something, he can get quite hot. Initially, he found the one-tempis difficult, but once he understood them, he did them perfectly. The work has always been physically easy for Gribaldi. However, given his natural suppleness, riding straight lines hasn't always been easy, but that elasticity in his body is a great advantage in other areas. Gribaldi has been great for my show career, and we've won a lot together.



Diederik van Silfhout won the gold medal at the European Championship for Young Riders in Portugal and won the World Cup final for Young Riders in Frankfurt.

After his approval in May, Gribaldi arrived back in Heerewaarden and covered 125 mares, before the first mare he bred had received her ultrasound pregnancy check three weeks later. In total, Gribaldi covered 250 mares his first year at stud, a respectable number. Van Uytert: "After the inspections, my wife Anne started riding him, and Matthias Jansson rode him later on. At the time, Matthias was taking lessons from Anky van Grunsven, so we were confident in his abilities. Matthias showed Gribaldi in the Pavo Cup as a four-year-old and finished second, behind Lucky Times. Unfortunately, he didn't compete in the Pavo Cup the following year because Matthias went back to Sweden, and Edward Gal had just started riding Gribaldi." "Back then, Edward was still working out of his facility in Giesbeek, which wasn't really suited for stallions, so he travelled to our stud a couple times a week to ride Gribaldi. Of course, a couple times a week wasn't enough, so when Edward relocated to De Harskamp, we decided to send Gribaldi there. That was really difficult for me because we had always kept him at home; I normally saw him several times a day and really enjoyed being around him. De Harskamp isn't close by, but the move was good for Gribaldi. Edward started him very carefully and took plenty of time preparing him for the advanced movements. Just when people were beginning to wonder what Gribaldi was doing, Edward started entering him in shows. From that point on, the combination won almost all their classes. They started in the Small Tour and

continued their winning streak all the way through Grand Prix. Even in the World Cups, the highest level of dressage competition, they kept on winning.

"Perhaps because Gribaldi was so successful, we became overconfident and expected too much from him. He did a lot of breeding and showing, plus he travelled long distances to compete in the foreign shows. The World Cup in Las Vegas didn't go well. That's where Gribaldi started resisting; perhaps he had built up more inner tension than we realized. In the past, he always wanted to work and never refused to do his job. After Las Vegas, we deliberately lightened his schedule. We'll keep on showing him, but actually, he has already more than proven himself."

### Supporters and Critics

Although Van Uyttert believed in Gribaldi from the start, the black stallion attracted both supporters and critics. One concern of critics was that Gribaldi would sire mares with too much 'blood', but according to Van Uyttert, that fear was unfounded. "In fact, Gribaldi needs a mare with 'blood' to produce his best offspring. Besides that, he has a rock-solid constitution and is the ideal horse for a stallion owner because he's never been lame a day in his life. He passes on his constitution quite well to his offspring, and I think that's just as important as his talent. What's more, he has a great temperament. If you wanted to, you could sleep in his stall with him. He also has a great attitude under saddle. Although some

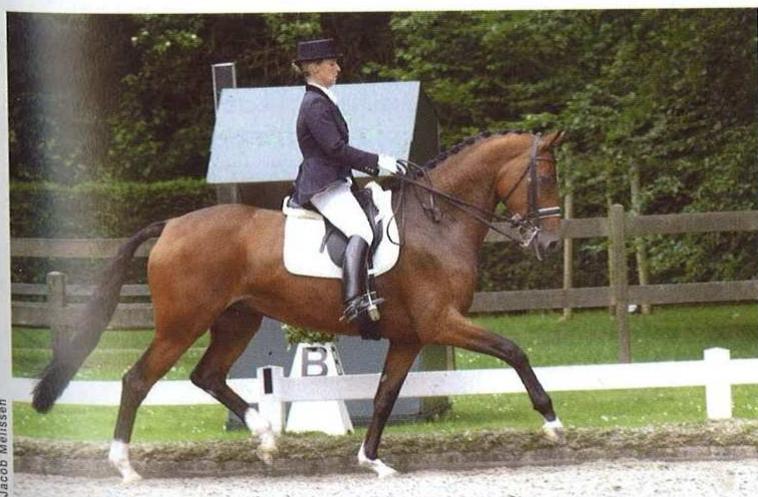
of his offspring need to be treated with kid gloves, others easily become Grand Prix horses that score in the 70% range. They may not always be the easiest ones to ride, but they have special qualities that make them superb dressage horses."

"I think Gribaldi has done extremely well in the show ring. He has achieved far more than many people ever thought he would. At first, he was disparaged by his critics, just like Jazz and Amor were, but it's a good thing that there were people back then who believed in those two stallions. We should be grateful to them; otherwise, dressage horse breeding would have never come this far. Gribaldi has fully proven himself as a sire of approved stallions because his offspring excel in the higher levels of dressage and win international competitions. He now has 14 approved sons in different countries, and Zardando is his first KWPN approved grandson. Gribaldi also has a unique quality that arouses people's emotions when he enters the ring, and his offspring Sither de Jeu and Totilas have inherited this same quality. I can easily say that Gribaldi is largely responsible for building our business in Heerewaarden. In the beginning, he covered a lot of mares, and just when we thought that breeders were losing interest in him, his first offspring started doing well in the sport, so breeders flocked to him again. In 2007 and 2008, he bred a lot in Germany. Last October, he was honored as the Trakehner of the Year in Neumünster; and at the show gala, Gribaldi and Edward performed a piaffe/passage

### IPS Painted Black

Anky van Grunsven rides Grand Prix with Gribaldi's son IPS Painted Black. He is as black as his sire and also KWPN approved. What's more, he is one of Van Grunsven's favorites. She explains: "Painted Black was six years old when he first arrived at my barn. Sjeff spotted him, and then I started riding him for the IPS Group. It wasn't long before I realized he was a very high-quality horse. He has great movement, and now he does all the Grand Prix movements easily. He also has a big heart; even though he's physically not very big, he's brave. And despite being a stallion, he's very well-behaved. He covers a lot of mares in the breeding season, but he's still quite manageable under saddle as well as on the ground. Of course, being a stallion, he gets distracted easily, so sometimes it takes more effort to keep his attention focused on me. I usually have a lot of fun with Painted Black, but that wasn't the case when I fell off him last year in Flyinge. Fortunately, that blow was softened when in June of the same year we scored 80.50% in the Freestyle in Lingen, Germany - that was great! Incidentally, that win wasn't a fluke because Painted Black had seven international wins last year. When I go to shows, I keep my eyes open for Painted Black and Gribaldi offspring; I always enjoy seeing them."

that sent chills up people's spines. At the end of their performance, the pair received a standing ovation so emotional that even the toughest guys had to choke back tears!"



Anne van Uyttert with Paragon (s. Gribaldi) at the 2005 Dressage National Championships in Nijmegen. Van Uyttert showed the keur mare in the Small Tour. Paragon also won Selection Champion of the Utrecht region, placed third at the National Mare Selection, and competed twice in the Pavo Cup final.



Coby van Baalen is the breeder of the talented dressage horse Pasternak (s. Gribaldi), whom she showed through Grand Prix level. The pair's achievements include placing third at the 2006 National Championships in Roosendaal. Unfortunately, Pasternak died prematurely.