Traditional Portuguese Equestrian Art
makes its return to Belém
Henrique Calado Riding Ring (Calçada da Ajuda)

EPAE – the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art, under the management of Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua, shall be regularly making performances and holding training sessions open to the general public at the Henrique Calado Riding Ring (on Calçada da Ajuda, in Belém) as from 20th July.

At this central location, the public thus gains the opportunity to attend not only training sessions but also weekly performances and galas. At the training sessions, visitors are able to witness the work that gets carried out daily by the riders whilst the performances feature a diverse range of choreographies and exercises, such as the carousel, long reins and airs above the ground to the sound of specifically selected music. In the galas, held to commemorate special dates and occasions, the performances are more extensive and include a diverse number of presentations accompanied by lighting and sound effects to further deepen and enrich the scenario.

EPAE, one of Europe’s four Equestrian Art Schools, was set up in 1979 with the specific objective of teaching, performing and raising the profile of traditional Portuguese Equestrian Art and in keeping with the legacy handed down by the Real Picaria (Royal Stables), the equestrian academy of the Portuguese court, which was closed down in the 19th century. After a time at the Portuguese Riding Company in Campo Grande, the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art took up residence in the National Palace of Queluz in 1996 and the site for its subsequent regular presentations open to the public.

Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua, S.A. (the managing entity of the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art since September 2012) in 2014 signed a protocol with the Portuguese Army providing for the restoration and transformation of the stables in order to appropriately house such performances and thereby bringing about the return of this national art to its place of origin, Belém. To this end, with investment of in the region of €1,355,000 co-financed by POR Lisboa, the venue underwent a broad reaching restructuring, with the adaptation of the entire interior, the restoration of the facades and roof and the installation of the necessary infrastructures. The project spanned an intervention area of around 2,200 m2, spanning three different facets: 1) welcoming the public with the installation of seating for around 300 persons (including VIP boxes), a ticket office, cafeteria, store and toilet facilities; 2) the technical support area with one area given over to riders, staff and support personnel as well as the control desk
for accompanying the performances (in terms of sound and light); toilet, shower and storage facilities; and 3) the riding arena ensuring the central focus of performances and designed for the horses whether undergoing training or in full-scale events; and in addition to a waiting area for the horses, with direct access as from the Calçada da Ajuda street. Additionally, horse boxes were fitted into the stables known as the Coaches of the Queen, located on the Water Wheel Patio as well as a covered arena for warming up.

According to Manuel Baptista, President of the Parques de Sintra – Monte da Lua board of directors, “the recovery of the Henrique Calado Riding Ring stands out as one of the key factors to the appropriate presentation of the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art to national and international audiences. With this covered venue, it is now possible to guarantee presentations and performances throughout all of the year, with the very highest standards of visitor reception and thus duly recognising the inherent quality of EPAE.”

In addition to the historical association of this area of the city with equestrian art, whether for military purposes or in service of the “Royal Household”, Belém is also one of the Portuguese capital’s major tourist attractions and thus correspondingly rendering greater visibility and ease of visitor access to the different proposals provided by the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art.

Visiting the Henrique Calado Riding Ring opens up the opportunity to travel back through Portuguese history, experiencing the moments that perpetuated the beauty of the Lusitano horses from the Alter Real Stud Farm, engaged in this art since the 18th century, with the performance of classical riding exercises alongside those from the Baroque period and the exercises making up the Court Games (tournaments held between the 16th and 19th centuries to commemorate festive occasions) and furthermore reflected in the costumes, saddles and harnesses, whether the working (Daily Training) or the gala versions (Weekly Presentations and Gala Performances) and exactly alike those in use in the earliest days of Portuguese Equestrian Art.

Henrique Calado Riding Ring - Calçada da Ajuda, Belém
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About the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art
The Portuguese School of Equestrian Art, with its headquarters in the gardens of the National Palace of Queluz, was founded in 1979 in order to foster the teaching, practice and profile of traditional Portuguese Equestrian Art. This draws upon the traditions of the Royal Stables, the equestrian academy of the 18th century Portuguese court, which was housed in the Royal
Stables of Belém, today the National Coach Museum, and exclusively riding Lusitanos bred by the Alter Real Stud Farm.
The management of the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art was awarded by the government to Parques de Sintra in September 2012 in conjunction with responsibility for the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz.

About Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua
Parques de Sintra - Monte da Lua, S.A. (PSML) is an exclusively publicly owned company set up in 2000 in the wake of the UNESCO classification of the Cultural Landscape of Sintra as World Heritage. The company receives no state funding and hence the restoration and maintenance of the heritage under its management is ensured by the revenues earned by its ticket offices, stores and cafeterias as well as renting out these sites for events.
In 2014, the areas under PSML management (the Park and National Palace of Pena, the National Palaces of Sintra and Queluz, the Chalet of the Countess of Edla, the Moorish Castle, the Palace and Gardens of Monserrate, Convent of Capuchos and the Portuguese School of Equestrian Art) welcomed around 1,928,000 visits, with 86% made by international visitors. The company also won the World Travel Award for Best Conservation Company in both 2013 and 2014.
The PSML shareholders are the following Portuguese entities: the General Directorate of the Treasury and Finances (in representation of the state), the Institute of Conservation of Nature and Forests, Tourism of Portugal and Sintra Municipal Council.
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