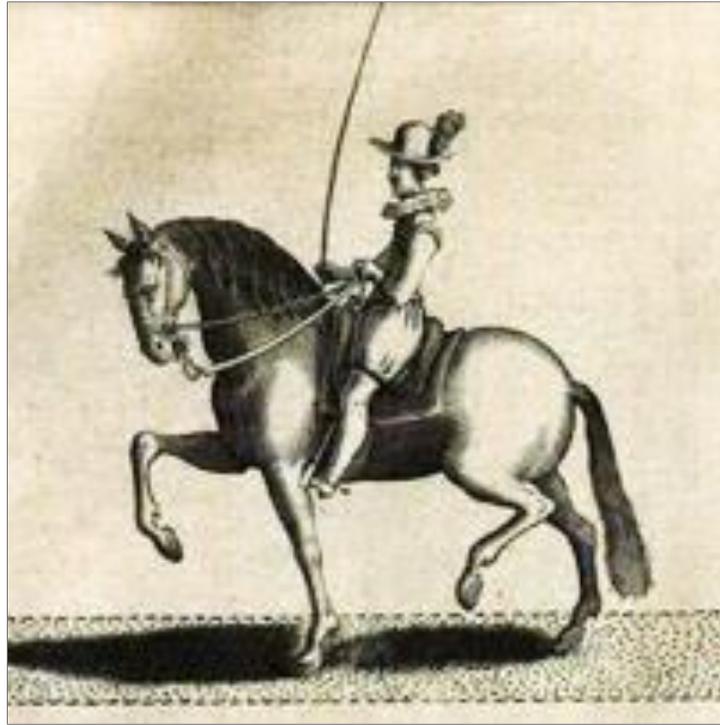


How to Ride Before a Prince

A short introduction, adapted from the full workshop developed and taught by HL Bridget Reade of Dunvegan (Jennifer Jobst). Presented by Viscountess Kerij-e and Mistress Annisa Gabrieli.



In Introduction- Riding as an Art Form

"How To Ride Before a Prince" is based on the 16th and 17th century manuals written to instruct noblemen how to train, ride and present themselves as fitting to their noble station. Unlike modern dressage, the displays were not specifically prescribed patterns, but concentrated on choosing movements to emphasize the best qualities of the rider and his mount. And unlike some previous SCA competitions, it is not freeform, but is based on the patterns and instructions found in period manuals. In these manuals, specific movements and figures are described that would be pleasing to the audience and would demonstrate the skills which the rider and horse should display. The most basic form is the "volte" or small circle, and these voltes are connected in different combinations with straight lines and turns. The training patterns become more and more complex, including changes in gait and "high school" movements requiring a great degree of collection. At its height, it includes the "airs above ground" made famous by the Spanish Riding School. It is a misconception that these were intended as battle maneuvers; rather they were intended to be impressive and entertaining to an audience.

In the SCA, HL Bridget and HL Peryn have adapted this combination of training patterns and noble display as a competition. Riders select a combination of documented movements from the provided sources, present this list to the judges, and then perform the movements. As in the original manuals, the goal is to show off the horse and rider to their strengths. So, if your horse doesn't turn on the haunches, then don't include that movement! The entire purpose of the presentation is perfecting the comportment of both horse and rider, to demonstrate the elegance of the unity between the two for the judges and audience.

For this short class, I have selected a few maneuvers that you can combine to emphasize your and your horse's strengths. I strongly encourage you to read the original sources in the linked bibliography and experiment with your own interpretation.



Comportment of the Rider:

The period riding masters placed great emphasis on how the rider should use their body, legs, and seat in order to appear more comely. A rider who could not sit a horse properly and have the horse perform obediently was essentially no rider at all:

“The instrument whereby this art is wrought is the rider... ought to be able to render a reason of everything that he teaches, in making the horse obedient to his will, that which if he cannot do, he is suspected as one unskillful in the art, and he knows not what he doeth.” (Astley, 1584, p.3)

“You must also carry your body straight and firm, your face upward, and your legs comely” (Corte p.92)

“... that all those horsemen who will be seen publicly must endeavor to follow with rhythm... always doing everything to appear as graceful as they can on horseback, because in addition to making a good show of themselves, they will also help the horse who will appear more elegant and better in that type of manege.” (Fiaschi, 1556, p.127)

“And see that you do not only sit him boldly... but also conceive that he and you do make as it were but one will. And accompany him with your body in any moving that he makes, always beholding his head right between his ears. Which shall be a sign unto you to know thereby, whither you sit right in your saddle or not.” (Grisone, 1550, p.43)

"For who so will have his horse rein well: let him bear his hand rather low than high, so shall he be able to keep it always at one stay, which is one of the chiefest points of horsemanship... And remember always when you turn your horse, to draw neither your arm nor hand more of one side then of another, but to keep it even with the horse's crest, and only by turning your fist a little inward, or outward, to signify unto him to turn." (Grisone ch.XI, trans. Blundeville 1560)

“... even to stop, ...you must not draw your hand hastily to you, but even with a little sway of your body back, and your hand together... and let your hand with your body go to their place again.” (Astley p.51)

“... settle yourself just in the midst of the saddle, letting your legs fall in due order, neither putting them too much forward, nor too much backward... settling yourself upon the stirrups, yet not so hard as though your feet were grown out of them. The surest hold and stay you must have on horseback shall consist not in the stirrups, but in your knees and thighs, which ought to be as [if] made fast or nailed to in the saddle: but from the knees downward let your legs be loose and at free liberty...” (Corte, 1573, p.34)

But the entire purpose of perfecting the comportment of both horse and rider was to demonstrate the elegance of the unity between the two:

“... so as these two several bodies may seem in all their actions and motions to be as it were only one body.” (Astley p.5)



Comportment of the Horse:

The riding masters of the sixteenth century had definite ideas of what was proper for both horse and rider. In general, the Italians looked for an arched neck carriage, the horse's face perpendicular to the ground, and the haunches tucked well under the horse, making the forehead light (see the woodcut from Fiaschi above). Head and neck carriage were considered very important, given how frequently they were discussed in period riding manuals.

“... that all his doings should be upon a steady hand, a just, placed, and settled head, with a pleasant mouth upon the bit, ... a chief point and whole substance of horsemanship.” (Astley p.42)

Despite the emphasis on the appropriate carriage of the head and neck, the haunches were not neglected. In fact, many of the period airs above the ground require an extremely collected horse who carries much of his weight on his hindquarters, ready to pivot his forequarters at a moment's notice. There were several exercises recommended by the Italian masters to assist the horse in achieving collection.

“Likewise when the horse comes to stop, the rider shall greatly help him, by casting his body backwards, which will cause him to stop low behind, even as were upon his buttocks.” (Corte p.70)

Fiaschi emphasized that the horse should keep a constant rhythm in all his gaits, so much so that many of his exercises are accompanied by woodcuts with musical notes that define the rhythm of the movement.

“In this second part of the treatise I intend [to show] some acts of riders on horseback and their horse tracks and the time in Music of some exercises so that no one can be blamed every time that he performs them if following these instructions.” (Fiaschi p.87 trans. Tomassini)

Contrary to the modern myth that most airs were trained as battle maneuvers, the period masters specifically cautioned against teaching such airs to a war-horse. Instead, the airs were to be used primarily because they were attractive to onlookers.

“... if you want to make some pesades [in pesade, the horse stops on his haunches and raises his front legs off the ground several times.], they should not be very high, because, besides that it would be ugly ... it would also be detrimental every time that he would behave like this while he's given encounter, because he could be easily knocked to the ground. This is what I dislike of so many pesades, especially in a war-horse.” (Fiaschi, p. 99, trans. Tomassini)

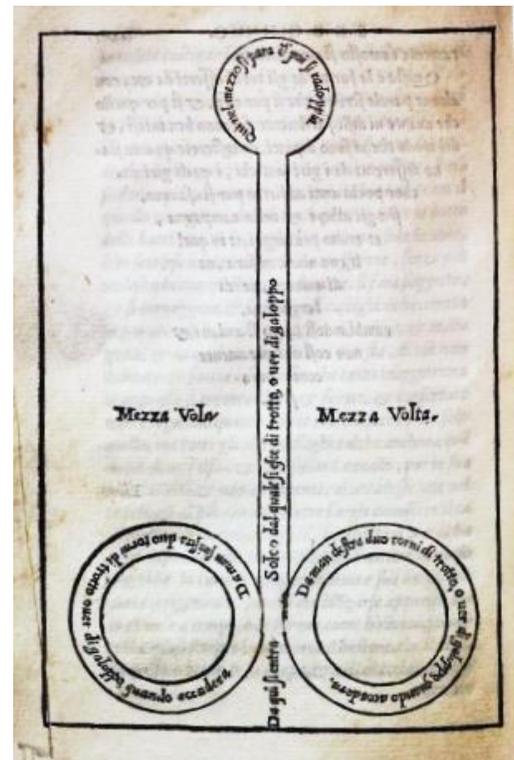
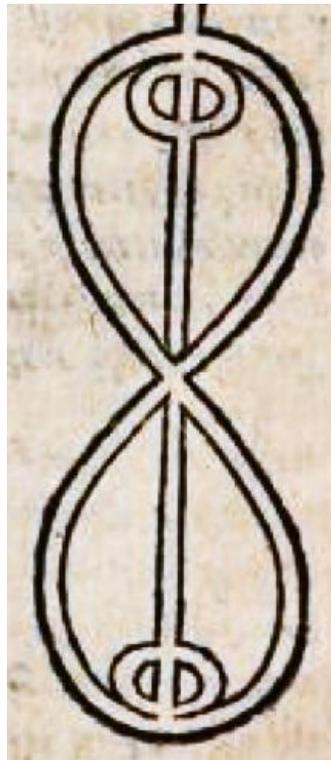
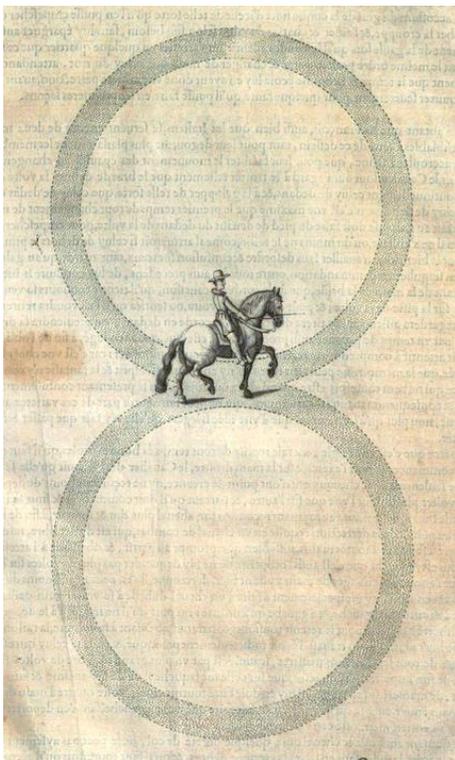
“But the one who would train a very fast horse, or one particularly suited to war, to these jumps and exercises, would be a fool, because in military operations they would rather produce hindrance and damage instead of any benefit to the Rider.” (Caracciolo, 1566, p. 426, trans. Tomassini)

“Maybe someone will consider useless and vain that a man toils to teach these jumps to his horse; but he is wrong, because in addition to the fact that a horse that goes swaying from jump to jump it is beautiful to see, certainly, by lightening his arms and legs through these exercises, he becomes more agile and more ready for all the other virtues that are required.” (Caracciolo, p. 426, trans. Tomassini)

Movements:

This section provides a small sample of movements. Many of these focus on training for the *Manege*, *Maneggio*, or *Passade*, a movement used for the military tactic of engaging, maneuvering nimbly, disengaging, turning on the hindquarters and returning to the combat. You will see this pattern often in the figures- a straight line connecting two small circles or half-circles. Making the maneuver swiftly, effortlessly and in repetition requires a well-balanced and fit horse, and a well-balanced and subtle rider, so the authors also provide many movements which are used to train both parties toward the goal.

The instructions for demonstrating one's skill include advice to the rider about choosing movements which will show their own horse to its best advantage, as well as making clear that upright posture, rhythmic movements and a unified horse and rider team are the ultimate goal for impressing a Prince.

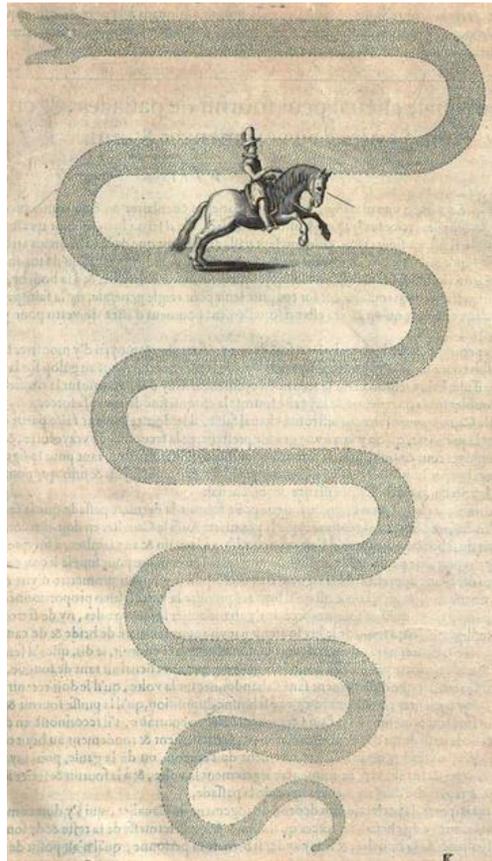


Left: de la Noue, 1620. Figure Eight. The two circles may be repeated, and the emphasis is on a smooth transition as the horse changes hands at the center.

Center, Corte, 1573. Esse serrato. The horse performs a figure eight with a volte at the top of each loop.

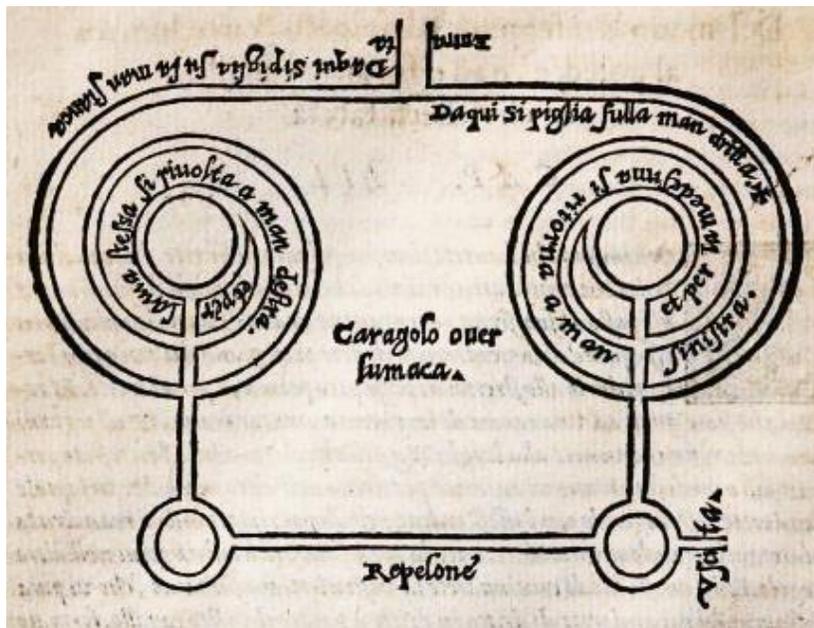
Right: Grisone, 1550. Tourni. The horse makes two circles (voltes) to the right, then two to the left, after which the horse proceeds in a straight line at either the trot or canter. At the end of the line, the horse performs a “raddoppio” (also called doubling, or modernly, a pirouette).

“And note that in turning diverse things are to be observed. First that he brings the contrary leg upon the other, ... also that he keep always one path, and that he neither presses forward, nor yet reel back in his turning, also that he keep his body in one stay, writhing neither head, neck, nor any part of his body, but to come in whole and round together, and close his turn in so narrow a row as may be.” (Grisone)



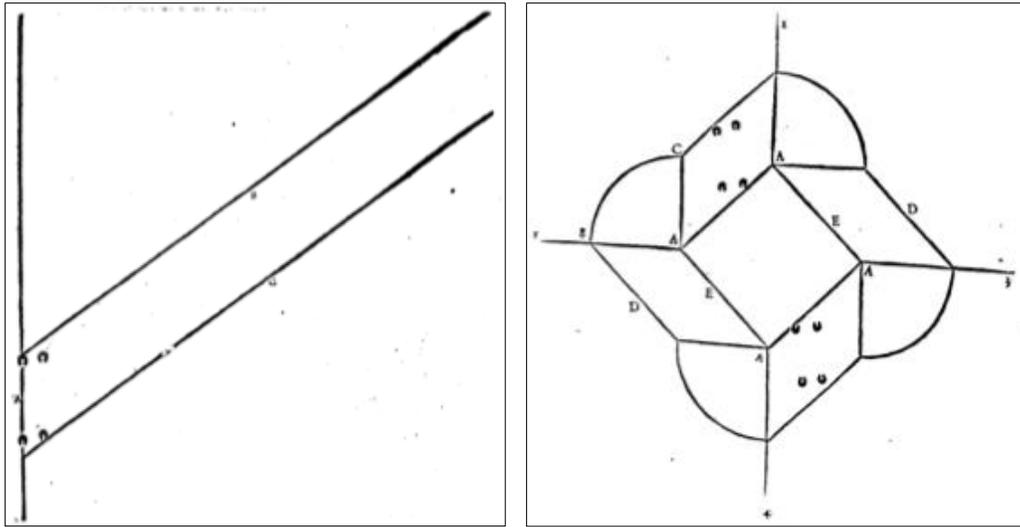
Left: Corte, 1573. Serpeggiare. a serpentine with a *tourni* [volte] at each end. The text directs the rider to wind left and right, make a *tourni*, then wind back, before finishing with a second *tourni* on the other hand.

Right: de la Noue, 1620. Serpentine. In this version, the loops of the figure become gradually narrower, until the final loop nearly resembles a volte.



Left: Corte, 1573. Caragolo (snail). a spiral, then a short straightaway, then a spiral in the other direction.

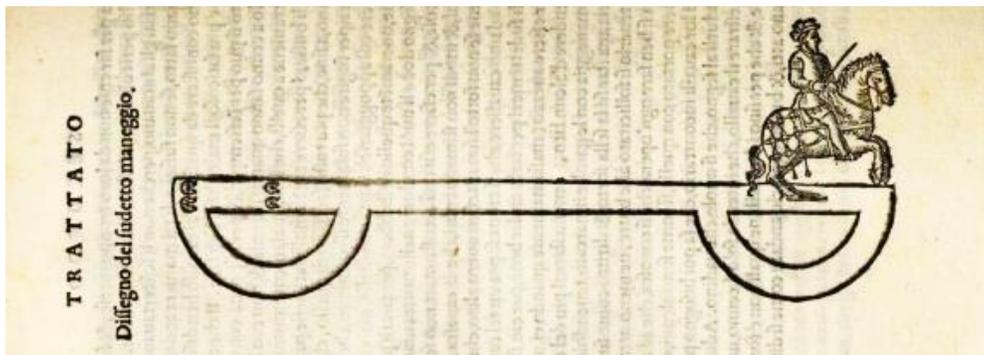
Right: De la Noue, 1620. Spiral. The faintly marked path exits from the center.



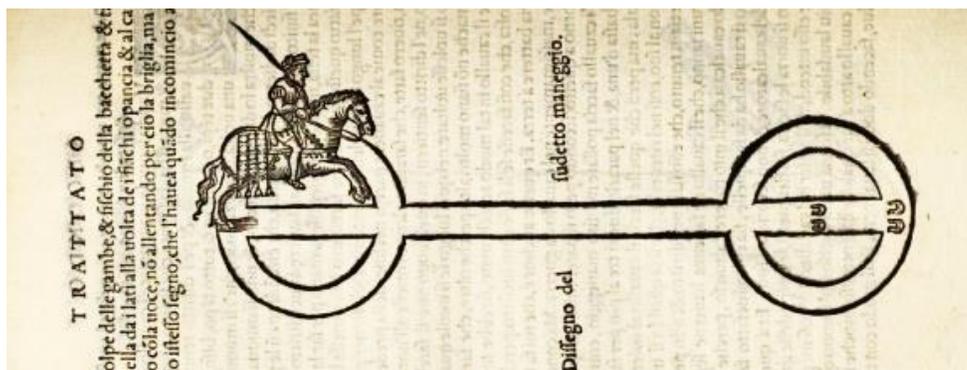
Left: De la Broue, 1602. Bias. “By the line of the letter A , one can judge what is straight, and this must be maintained without the horse bending the body or the neck. Track B represents the track that must be taken first by the right front foot. And the line of C shows the track of the hind foot.” (trans. Jobst)

Right: De le Broue, 1602. Bias Square. Leg-yield or half-pass, with quarter turns on the hindquarters. “To finish the first figure, make one more quarter, similar to the others.” (trans. Jobst)

These movements are the *Passade* or *Maneggio*, which consists of a straight line, a volte or pirouette, a return to the starting place, and another volte or pirouette.



Fiaschi, 1556, maneggio di mezzo tempo. After going in a straight line, the horse turns on his hind legs in a half pirouette.



Fiaschi, 1556, maneggio di una volta e mezza (a volte and a half). After going in a straight line, the horse performs a pirouette and a half, then returns to the track.

Putting it all together:

From Grisone's *Gli Ordini di Calvalcare* (1550), translated by Blundeville (1560):

“Howe to ryde a horse to the best shew before a Prynce”

[I have modernized spelling and truncated this text in order to make it quicker to read. See the linked bibliography for the complete original text sources]

First, on where the audience should stand to watch you:

“Some do think it good for those that would see, to stand right before the stopping place, and some would have them to stand on the right hand of the Rider, even with the stopping place, and some, on the same hand not even with the stopping place, but down toward the middle Carere [the riding space]. Of all which, that right before the stopping place in my judgment is worst for two causes: First that the room may be too small to receive any number of men; Second it is perilous. For if the horse be headstrong and should chance to break the bridle, he might run headlong upon the lookers on. And therefore I would not wish a Prince or noble man to take view of a horse in that place, unless it were from a house out of a window or from some scaffold. But rather to stand on the one side toward the middle Carere. So shall he stand without danger, and see the beginning, the middle, and ending. And it should be so much the better if he stand on the right hand of the Rider, for so the Rider at both ends of the Maneging path shall turn his face always towards the Prince, and not his back. The place of standing then being thus appointed, and the Prince there ready to behold what your horse can do.”

Second, on how you should proceed with your demonstration of skill:

“Ride first fair and softly toward the Prince, and do your reverence. That done, depart with a good round trot toward the farthest end of the Carere path, bearing your rod with the point upward, towards your right shoulder, and being come to the end, let the point of your rod fall toward the left shoulder of your horse, and make him to turn a half turn on the right hand, and then to stay a little while. That being done, pass him forward for three or four steps fair and softly, and immediately after, put spurs unto him, giving him a lively, swift, and lusty [canter/lope], and pass before the Prince to the place of stopping. Whereas after he hath stopped even upon his buttocks, then you shall turn him on the right hand, and so go back again in the self same path, and there stop him, and turn him on the left hand. And so observing always one time and measure, manege him to and fro, as often together as you shall think meet, but let the last stop be at the end where the Prince stands. And after that you have stopped your horse, make him to double [pirouette] on each hand once or twice together, and immediately after, or else before, entertain him with the Capriole and Corvetti. Also after he hath run, stopped and advanced, let him breathe awhile in the self same place, and then give him what kind of manege you shall think good, wherein good [discretion] must be used to consider the quality, strength and condition of the horse, to the intent that order, time and measure may be kept accordingly.”

For your performance:

Choose up to three movements, and practice them in order. Plan out the pattern so that you begin with a reverence to the Prince, and finish facing him again. If your horse has difficulty with a particular movement, try different ones. Ride beautifully, and have fun!

Bibliography:

The full bibliography for this project can be found here:

<http://howtoridebeforeaprince.blogspot.com/p/bibliography-modern-works-music.html>

How To Ride Before A Prince

Name:

Special Considerations:

Description of Movement & Reference <i>e.g. Serpeggiare, Corte</i>	Diagram of Movement	Score (1-5) <i>Is the movement accurate?</i> <i>Are the horse & rider in unity and comely to the observer?</i>	Judge's Comments
Enter and Reverance-Grisone			

Collective Marks:

Scores 1-5

Judge's Comments:

Gaits performed W T C	Use of Period Sources <i>Does the rider perform documented period movements?</i>	Accurate representation of a 16th C Performance <i>Does the performance resemble the description?</i>	
Comeliness of Horse <i>Do the horse's gaits and carriage reflect the "comely and just" descriptions?</i>	Comeliness of Rider <i>Is the rider's position and unity with the horse similar to the masters' description?</i>	Overall Impression	

Rules and Guidelines:

This competition is meant to simulate 16th Century performances before a prince. This means that you get to show off your horse to the best of his/her advantage! It's okay if you do your entire performance at a walk, but try new movements. Next time, there will be bonus points for finding and documenting movements that are not in this handout :) Please give this completed sheet to the Herald before the competition is scheduled to begin.

