

Kullatorp

A R A B I A N S



Kullatorp” is the name of an austere grand house, built in 1880 by the Blixen family, who were later made famous in the book *Out of Africa*. Set in the rolling forests in the southern tip of Sweden near Malmö, the house looks out over a sweeping lawn, past a small lake to the square stone barn that houses the horses, predominantly Polish mares and fillies. Here in this barn a newer definition of the name Kullatorp — as Arabian stud farm is developing. The quality of the horses is self-evident, the immense attention to detail is striking, and the elegance is repeated all the way down to the tiniest flower and the last embroidered corner of a horse rug. Everything at Kullatorp melds in a harmonious picture, encompassing the vision of its founder Maria Rendahl. However, to call Kullatorp a stud farm would be missing the point; it is dedicated to higher utopian ideals, and the breeding of classic horses is but one part of the picture. For all the energy expended on creating a physical appearance that charms the eye, far more has been spent creating an environment compatible with the natural behavior of the horse. This is combined with an eagerness to adopt ideas, some new, some old, which can promote the well-being and maximum performance of the equine inhabitants, and then to share and impart these ideas to a new generation of Arabian horse owners.



Previous page:
Lekier (Probat x La Mej), at home in his stall.

Top: Maria and Jan Erik Rendahl on their wedding day ...“To love and be loved.”

Bottom: The home of Maria and Jan Erik Rendahl at Kullatorp.

Facing page, top: Warszula (Palas x Wacpanna), at 19 years of age, was last year’s Scandinavian Open Reserve Champion Mare, and 2002 Swedish National Champion Mare and High Score winner of the show.

Facing page, bottom: The vast, stone barn of Kullatorp.



Sweden is a country familiar with idealism and it takes the work of improving man's lot very seriously. It was a Swede, the chemist, inventor, and philanthropist Alfred Nobel, who bequeathed a fund for the establishment of Nobel prizes, first awarded in 1901. Not only a national context, but a personal context is necessary for an understanding of the depth and determination that underlies the ethics of Kullatorp. Kullatorp is the brainchild of Maria and its seeds were planted in her childhood love of horses. From the ages of eight to fifteen she exercised this love at the local riding school, learning to show jump. Unfortunately, her enthusiasm was not encouraged by her strictly religious family, who banned her from competing at show jumping because the competitions always occurred on Sundays. As an older teenager, she embraced the family conventions and began training as a priest, but eventually the dogmatic side of this vocation repelled her and she turned to academia. With an MA in theology and literature coupled with philosophy, she was invited to do a doctorate in theology and literature, but abandoned this pursuit at the age of twenty three, concluding that academia was not offering enough of the "real" world to her. She was then recruited by a financial company where she became a manager for marketing and later for business development. One day the company vice president decided that the management team should develop strategic competence and Professor Jan Erik Rendahl entered the stage.

Jan Erik has a comprehensive background in both management consulting and research, and holds a

professorship at the Lund Institute of Technology in the Department of Design Sciences. He is also a trained psychologist who made doctoral studies in organizational theory and the relationship between work, values, and personality at Harvard. Utilizing his research, Maria developed the first value-based MasterCard system in Europe in cooperation with the World Wide Fund for Nature, which provides important financial support for WWF Sweden in their efforts to conserve nature for coming generations. Maria's very clear business philosophy is represented in her established company "Kundvärden" (which has a two-dimensional meaning: customer values and host/hostess). She believes it is not enough to develop a business for enriching only one's own pocket, but that it has to be a win-win situation in which mankind and nature are respected partners. Jan Erik and Maria were married in 1998 and with this couple, Kullatorp brings a formidable intellect and powerful sense of fairness to the Arabian world.

Ten years ago Maria was riding a new motorbike and came upon her first Arabian horse show. Having long ago identified the Arabian as her favorite horse because of its dynamic character, she was instantly captivated by the sight of these horses trotting dramatically into the showring to the applause of the crowd. Never one to let grass grow under her feet, Maria instantly withdrew the first profit from her company and placed it on a charming Arabian filly foal. The new motorbike was consigned to obscurity and a runaway train of events began. Her first Arabian was Malekat el Nil, an Egyptian-related mare who, although



no longer a part of Maria's breeding program, will remain at Kullatorp forever in gratitude for the many things she taught her then novice Arabian horse owner about the correct way to handle an Arabian.

After this impulsive first buy, Maria did more research and she came to the realization that she needed to create a goal before purchasing another horse. She then took the time to educate herself, and like many breeders in Sweden, came to the conclusion that Polish horses were the way forward. Her mentor was Cecilia Bourghardt of Aspenäs Stud, who shared her knowledge and passionate interest patiently over many late-night chats. In 1995, they went to Poland together for Maria's first visit. "I knew I had found the source I was looking for," Maria says. "The continuity of the state studs provides a depth of knowledge, embedded over many generations of horse breeding and the Poles combine this with a proud passion for their horses. Their horses were my dream: gentle, graceful and elegant, and like good wines, they only improve with age, the mares getting ever more queenly as they mature."

Maria's first visit to Poland coincided with the sensational debut of the Monogramm offspring in the showring, when the two chestnut fillies Kwestura and



Facing page: Above left: Paradisia (Alt x Prognosa), a Kullatorp yearling star of the future. Mare of Sweden, pictured here with Emma Maxwell.



Above right: Patriarch (Lekier x Prognosa), pictured here winning in Norway, shown by Maria Holgersson.

Garden with memorial stones for four-legged friends.

Fallada took first and second place on the first step of their march to world domination. There was another chestnut filly by Monogramm in the sale, Zalotna out of the Aachen-winning Piechur daughter Zaleta, from the lovely dam line of Zazula. Maria tried for a week before the sale to buy her in advance, but the Poles remained unswerving and into the sale ring Zalotna went. Maria describes this first introduction to the horse auction as an elaborate form of torture, she was so besotted by this filly. Happily the final bid was hers and the first Polish-bred daughter of Monogramm to go through the auction found a new home. At two years old, Zalotna was Scandinavian Open Champion, demonstrating the fabulous trot and finely arched neck the world has come to associate with mares of this breeding. Maria has since become a familiar sight in Poland, always elegantly dressed and quite irrepressible, indeed ecstatic, if she is the successful buyer. She is also a great auction co-conspirator and I distinctly remember her propelling me into the ladies toilets to fill out a final bid card for Premier who she correctly insisted was the horse for me, and I would definitely trust her intuitions in the future!

Also offered in that first sale as Lot 3 was a charming young grey mare, Emancypacja, by Falsyfikat and out of legendary Emigrantka (Eukaliptus x

Emigracja). When this mare was led out unsold, Maria says she felt that an angel was looking after her, and she ran as fast as she could to Director Jaworowski and asked him to save the mare for one month, explaining that her young company's budget was depleted after buying Zalotna, and she must go home "to widen it for this lovely mare." Laughing, he promised to keep Emancypacja for her and one month later she returned to Michalow. She spent a wonderful day there looking at the broodmares, and asked the Director to point out among the young mares who were not for sale, one who would be a great foundation for a

new stud. He pointed his walking stick at the young dark-grey Prognoza by Etogram out of another very famous mare, Palestra by Penitent. Maria marshalled her resources of charm and a deal was made that day. Maria feels indebted to Ignacy Jaworowski; always the perfect gentleman, he assisted her greatly with his generous advice and honest description of his own horses.

The dramatic and energetic Prognoza has come into her own at the Swedish Nationals, where she has been named Swedish National Champion Mare three times! The first mare in Swedish history to be so honored. In 2001 she obtained the highest score of the show, 93.42. Maria loves Prognoza for her fiery temper, which she will admit reminds her a little of her own. Her beautiful black-grey homebred daughter Pacifica (by Wadim) has also won at the Scandinavian Open and was awarded the Swedish Trophy for most successful Swedish-bred horse in 2002.

The Polish mares at Kullatorp have been augmented by one of the very best daughters of super sire Eukaliptus, Calisia, out of Catalina by El Paso. As her pedigree suggests, this mare is a queenly flea-bitten grey with an extraordinarily fine neck and she has also been Scandinavian Open and Swedish National Champion mare in Maria's ownership. Calisia was one of the finest mares ever bred at Kurozweki, and Maria succeeded in purchasing her only after two years of negotiation, just before the stud was closed down and sold to private owners, Tarus Arabians. Calisia is one of Maria's most ideal Arabian mares, she says one of her proudest moments came when Calisia scored an unbroken row of 20s for type at her first show and a total of 94.67.



Emancypacja (Falsyfikat x Emigrantka).

In the 1998 auction, Maria added the bay Piechur daughter Estetyka, a deer-like mare with an elevated trot and slightly watchful expression. A second member of the Zazula family is also present at Kullatorp: Zenia by Grandorr, a mare with huge eyes who has won her class at the Swedish Nationals.

A veteran lady and one of the most coveted mares in Poland also joined the team in 2000, the once-seen, never-forgotten Warszula. A Polish National Reserve Champion Mare, Warszula is from the classic cross of Palas on a Bandos daughter, her dam being Wacpanna from the ever feminine "W" family. She is also dam of the successful European stallion Wadim. Warszula, at 19 years of age, was last year's Scandinavian Open Reserve Champion Mare, and 2002 Swedish National Champion Mare and High Score winner of the show. After two barren years, Warszula is now in foal to Alt (Pamir x Alejka).

As is evident from the results above, Kullatorp has become the powerful show team in Sweden. Maria notes, "The importance of the show world is as a forum for examining the breeding stock and production of other breeders. Also for comparing the relative merit of one's own horses with those of other breeding programs. I also love the glamour and excitement of watching mares and stallions parade their best movement for the crowd and I am always excited most to see a horse that loves itself and the audience, enjoying the public gaze. However, for me, this is where the importance ends. While like everyone I love winning and am always delighted to win a championship, and must be approached with trepidation after an unexpected defeat, I do not believe that a championship garland is the be-all and end-all of a serious breeding program. An overwhelming desire to win can distort the aims of showing away from a comparative evaluation of bloodstock, to a no-holds-barred race for glory and status amongst owners. This has led to the ugly sights in the showring, where the life of the horse is secondary to the ambitions of the owner. I



Top: Calisia

(Eukaliptus x Catalina by El Paso), has been Scandinavian Open and Swedish National Champion mare in Maria's ownership.

Left: Commander

(Gazal Al Shaqab x Calisia) at one month of age.

Bottom: Calinda

Shakla (Sanadik El Shaklan x Calisia), at six months of age.





absolutely do not accept this behavior in my own yard. The true qualities of the Arabian are not expressed by an exaggerated and rigid way of showing. Arabian type is expressed in carriage and through the eyes of the horse, as well as in its outward shape, and a horse that does not display its own character and spirit in the showing is a poor version of its real self.”

Maria does not want to increase the size of her broodmare band, believing that if she were to do so, she would not be able to have a personal relationship with each horse. Furthermore, she believes that “focusing on high goals is a more responsible attitude to take, rather than breeding a large number of foals in the hope that one or two will be good. Overproduction of horses is a big problem and the sensible placement of these horses in a home where they will be correctly appreciated and looked after is not a minor problem. However, I hope I am also honest enough to admit when my production is not good enough, so that I can understand and learn from my mistakes. Good breeders set themselves a goal which remains the same, although they may change the methods they use to achieve it. They do


not follow fashion, but they do listen, and they use the knowledge they accumulate like a dictionary. They also follow their intuitions — sometimes this is called luck.”

With such a group of extraordinary foundation mares the next question is always, Which stallion? Maria explains, “My foundation mares all come from the very best families bred in Poland and proven for generations, but I have no illusions about the label ‘pure Polish,’ which I consider more a marketing definition than an absolute truth. The fact remains that Arabians are one race of horse and all bloodlines are acceptable to me for breeding purposes, as long as they are of the highest quality.” Her first stallion was the multi-champion CA Emir, a Polish-cross stallion of great elegance, who sired a homebred reserve champion at the Scandinavian Open. However, he failed to sire what she was looking for and sticking to her own immensely high standards, she gelded him and he now helps “pony” the youngsters through the forest. A willingness to apply the strictest of rules to herself as well as to everyone else is a repeated theme with Maria, unusual where so many in the horse world will make excuses for themselves but not for others. She is adamant that a good reputation stands or falls, not by words, but by deeds.

A second stallion, Lekier (Probat x La Mej by Algomej), was rescued from obscurity in 1997. Already a winner at the Salon du Cheval as a three-year-old, he was a victim of the market slump who disappeared off the scene. He needed considerable physical and mental rehabilitation when she found him. A classical big-eyed, deep-bodied Kuhailan type, with a heavily flea-bitten coat that gives him a “Comet” appearance, Lekier wins most senior stallion classes in which he is entered. And although he is not suited to every mare, he has sired some nice foals for Maria, including the three fillies Confidentialia, Eufemia, and Perfecta, who in true Polish style will be lovely broodmares in years to come. Lekier has earned the right to remain at Kullatorp for the rest of his life. The pure Polish stallion Alt, owned by Ramonia Arabians, is the other Polish stallion who has been used with success, siring the excellent 2002 bay filly Paradisia out of Progoza. He is also sire of 2002 Brazilian National Champion Stallion Almir.

Inspired by the Sanadik/Eukaliptus cross that produced the 2002 All Nations Cup Champion Mare Eldorada, Maria selected Sanadik El Shaklan to cover Calisia, who produced the stunning, typey filly Calinda Shakla. The Sanadik Al Shaklan son Ffatal Attraction was also used, siring the nice yearling filly Zilhouette. For 2003, Maria chose the World Champion stallion Gazal al Shaqab (he was also chosen by Janow Podlaski). He sired two colts, Commander (x Calisia) and Zunnan Gazal (x Zenia), and the fabulous filly Zsa Zsa Gazelle (x Zalotna). For next year, Kullatorp mares are again in foal to Alt and Khidar (Ansata Sinan x Elizja).

While Maria has a very serious, and occasionally quite ferocious ambition to breed “the sort of horse who rises above his contemporaries and inspires an era,” I would be misleading you if I painted a picture of someone without a sense of humor. Maria explains that one of her favorite things about horses is their complete oblivion to their owner’s fragile egos, and their ability to make a fool of you, usually when you are at your most self-important. My most memorable moment at Kullatorp was Maria’s demonstration of “join up” with her first mare Malekat el



This page: Zenia
(Grandorr x
Zenobia).

Facing page: The
2003 colt Zunnan
Gazal (Gazal al
Shaqab x Zenia).

Chad



Above: Zalotna (Monogramm x Zaleta), Junior Champion Mare, Scandinavian Open, Blommeröd, pictured here with trainer Emma Maxwell and Maria.

Left: Zilhouette (Fatal Attraction x Zalotna), at one year old.

Below: Zalotna with her Gazal Al Shaqab filly Zsa Zsa Gazelle.



Nil, after dinner in a fine summer twilight. Maria let Malekat out of her stable loose and ran around the lawn laughing with her mare following her for the most part, tail in the air. Occasionally, however, the mare would disappear into the gloom and rapid hoofbeats on gravel resounded, followed by more laughter and shrieks of entreaty, for the mare to return — which she usually did. Maria believes that owners of Arabians should always remember to enjoy them for their natural selves and for their most powerful virtue — their ability to communicate across species. Furthermore, she likes other people to enjoy her horses too and Kullatorp hosts an annual party to liven up the long northern winters, either to celebrate the arrival of such treasures as Warszula or the 1998 “Kullahunt” when guests were invited to either bring their own horse or borrow one of Maria’s (National Champion Mares included!) and hunt a mounted Maria, through the trails in the forests surrounding the farm, followed, naturally, by a party with plentiful food and wine.

Spending time there and observing the carefully thought-out routines that serve the horses, one is impressed by Kullatorp’s air of serenity. For Maria, “training is promoting the will of the horse, not breaking it. The will of the horse is simple: surviving, reproducing, and escaping from danger, and you have to provide the freedom for horses to do this. You must then base all training on the biological history of horses. The ideas of Monty Roberts, Pat Parelli, Dan Sumner and others are not romantic notions, they are correct from the base up. The use of force is primitive and a new form of show training is necessary that makes the horse want to show.” From the time of their birth, all horses spend as much time as possible outside in paddocks, often living out in the short but sweet Swedish summers. The paddocks are large enough for the groups of youngsters to race each other and develop bone and tendon. As yearlings their show careers are not taken too seriously. They attend one or two shows to learn the basics but do not undergo intensive individual training because Maria feels it is more important for them to learn herd socialization skills and exercise gently but constantly in the field. In common with Polish practice, some of the three-year-olds are trained for racing. Adult show horses are conditioned under saddle in the peaceful forests, which keeps their attitudes fresh and sweet. The farm is managed by “little Maria,” Maria Holgersson, who has been there since the beginning of the enterprise and who is a steadfast member of the Kullatorp family.

Maria has taken many deliberate steps along the path to her goal, and neatly summarizes her belief that “quality should be the gold thread that runs through every element of my horse breeding enterprise. Quality is expressed not just in aesthetics but backed up in every other dimension of the word: honesty to oneself about the real quality of each horse; integrity in business dealings; ethical behavior in showing; respect for the horse in training. Every piece is important to attain perfection.” When the Kullatorp horses arrive at a show, in immaculate matching dark blue and gold livery, and the trademark Kullatorp flowers appear to decorate the stable aisle, the livery and decoration represent only the surface of Maria’s dreams. Her admirably strong ethical streak, perhaps the most telltale sign of her upbringing, is most apparent in the responsibility she takes for those horses she has bred and for their future lives. While most horses are vetted for soundness before





purchase by their prospective owners, in Maria's case, prospective owners are vetted for suitability before they are allowed to purchase. For the most part she has encouraged young people buying their first Arabian to spend time at the farm, some for days, and some for weeks, learning about how to correctly handle their prospective horse and getting to know it better before it leaves Kullatorp. Last year one delighted new owner was Jenny Nordlund whose new gelding Zonogramm (Wadim x Zalotna) was National Champion Gelding, and who is now also Maria's assistant manager! Dedication to the next generation of Arabian owners is an important part of the Kullatorp ethos.

Education is an ongoing process at Kullatorp and once every few months a Friday evening is set aside for a seminar to which a judge, a vet, or a horse trainer is invited to give an informal speech followed by a discussion of ideas with the thirty or so people, including the family, and owners, or prospective owners, of Kullatorp horses and anyone else who wants to come. The ideas are basically scientific ideas but an open mind to new methods of dealing with horses is encouraged, excepting the more "new age" ideas that are not backed up by sensible research. Maria explains, "In 2003 we took the first steps in establishing The Kullatorp Academy. My vision with The Kullatorp Academy is to share the experiences and knowledge that we acquire here at Kullatorp. It is intended for those who: are planning to obtain an Arabian, have recently obtained an Arabian, might be interested in showing, or are going to invest in quality breeding, or for those who just like to take part in other's experiences. The Kullatorp Academy will discuss issues and experiences from our stud, our show activities and from our breeding. We will also recommend suppliers that fulfill our quality demands, literature that we appreciate, and experiences that we believe can be useful for other people."

In the future Maria would like to extend this exchange of information between breeders worldwide, and set up a network of breeders who share common values. These values she defines as, "a dedication to beautiful, quality Arabians of any bloodline. People who genuinely like horses more than they like glory and this standard is evident not just in their claims but their practice. All breeders are faced with choices, for short-term gain over long-term goals. In today's showing it is easy to be kind if you have no ambition, but if you do have ambition you have to find a balance for it or it can act as a devil in the making of decisions. The focus on short-term goals could be a threat to the whole future of the showing. Curiosity and an



Top: Jan Erik and his dog Leah.



Middle left: "Love to play and have fun with Malakat El Nil (Muzannif DE x E-Vensong)."

Middle right: Welcome home party for Warszula, complete with red carpet and red roses, and plenty of friends and food.



Bottom: A welcoming lane to Kullatorp.



Top: Estetyka
(Pierchur x Estancja)
and her foal Elysion
(by Alt [Pamir x
Alejka]).



Right: The Kullatorp symbol in action.



interest in learning, coupled with generosity and an interest in teaching would also be necessary.” Maria hopes such a network could provide an entirely trustworthy route for new owners to get into Arabians and then furnish them with the information they need to educate themselves in how best to achieve their goals, information that at the moment is acquired mainly by trial and error.

The symbol of Kullatorp, chosen as carefully as everything else at the stud, is the simple imprint of a bunch of grapes, simple in its physical manifestation but complex in its symbolism. The words Maria associates with the bunch of grapes are the words she hopes people will associate with her enterprise: “It is firstly a symbol of the Greek and Roman classical times, representing an age of elegant and precisely designed architecture and great advances in learning, but it is equally a symbol of the generosity of nature, coming to fruition, and finally of course it reminds you of wine, happiness, and love.”

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Dr. Steinhoff and Prof. Rendahl worked together as management consultants for several years before founding Steinhoff & Rendahl Consulting and Ventures in 1999. The company is driven by the values: respect for people and nature coupled with economic and technological development.

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