

# Anna STOJANOWSKA

## JUDGE PROFILE

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**Tutto Arabi:** *When and where your most important judge experience started?*

**Anna Stojanowska:** *Well I should say "it was long, long time ago...". I just realized that the first foreign show I judged in Italy. It was 1998 and Fausto Scanzi was organizing the show in Rogoredo (pisownia sprawdzona z Włochem), I went there full of excitement but also doubts if I will manage. The excitement I still feel until nowadays. And every show is a chance to get more experience. It's also true that since 14 year I work for State Property Agency in the section responsible for Polish state horse breeding, not only pure bred Arabians, I had a chance to meet and work with the best Polish breeding authorities. Mrs Izabella Zawadzka, Mr Władysław Byszewski... they created my professional „spinal cord” and taught me how to look on a horse. Besides, visiting the state studs few times a year during the seasonal inspections and watching several hundred if not thousands of horses – mares, stallions, offspring I still get my experience. And the knowledge is never enough... there is never enough of knowledge...*

**TA:** *You are one of those people closely connected with Polish but also world's show scene since many years. Which of the famous horses influenced your look on Arabian horse nowadays the most? Was there any particular horse you have been judging that especially came to your memory?*

**AS:** *I would be not honest saying that it was not the Polish breeding that created my look on Arabian horse. Here*



*I grew up and with it I am related in my professional life. Of course it doesn't mean that I don't care about the other breeders' achievements. I admire the refined beauty of Straight Egyptian horses, dryness and femininity of its mares and masculinity of its stallions. I'm very impressed by „desert bred” horses competing in separate classes, because they remind us how the Arabian horse was like in the past. Oh, there are a*

*lot of particular horses that impressed me by their beauty, charisma, character seen even in those few minutes of show presentation. Sometimes when I look on the couple handler-horse I wonder which one is a leader and whose has a stronger personality. For example I admire Kwestura as her character is as exciting as her beauty. She is the individuality.*

**TA:** *One may have an impression that in the modern show horse breeding is mostly about the shape of the head and expressive movements as the most important, also some of the judges seem to pay the most of their attention in judging those features that in consequence pushes a lot of breeders to run for the pretty heads only. Do you think this is true and so how the show horse breeding will be developing in the future or how it should be?*

**AS:** *Unfortunately it's true. Looking for the ideal beauty, paradoxically expressed in more and more unnatural shape of heads, we are losing the vision of the whole horse somewhere, the horse that anyway should be a riding animal not decorative one. However the opinions of some breeders that to win a show it's enough to have a horse with a pretty head are not so untrue. It seems that the proper scores for body, legs and even*



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movement has less importance nowadays. Of course we all may know that the specialization in Arabian horse breeding is now so high that a horse being „brave and beautiful” is just a slogan not really related to the reality. Since many years we see the separate specialization in show, race, endurance or even pleasure riding bloodlines of Arabian horses. Od lat wida wyra nie podział na linie pokazowe, wy cigowe, rajdowe a nawet rekreacyjne. However, in my opinion, the task of Arabian horse shows is judging the exterior meaning also correctness of conformation not only its beauty. As in everything the proportion and common sense are necessary. And the best if the beautiful head with swan neck is connected with solid body on correct legs. And also that the horse flies in movements... It's good to dream. Of course a lot depends on judges because they, through their choices, create the vision of the ideal Arabian horse in a big way.

**TA:** *What, in your opinion, is the most difficult in being a judge?*

**AS:** *The tasks of a judge nowadays are difficult in general, because an incommensurable and relative beauty is to be judged. And we try to close this beauty in numbers, display in numerical order and classify. An ungrateful task in general. Pity and hard are the moments where one panel of judges is not able to judge at the same level, and when it seems that each of the judges “speaks a different language”. I mean when the tastes and preferences are completely different. Please don't get me wrong I don't mean everybody judging the same – this is why show organizers invite three or more judges, to make the final score the average of different notes. I mean when these differences are so big that it's impossible to choose the best horse in the class. When the breeders in a whirl don't know how to interpret the results because the amplitude of the scores goes from 16 to 19, the pleasure of judging disappears somewhere and the bad taste and even feeling of guilty are the ones staying when we consider the breeders who invested their power to enter the horse to the show but they didn't get the proper evaluation of it. There is also a problem to combine the family and professional life with the weekends out for the shows. Unfortunately a week doesn't want to be longer...*

**TA:** *Are there any aspects with which the current European judging systems could be improved in your opinion?*

**AS:** *I would start from that in my opinion the ideal judging system doesn't exist. As I mentioned above we judge the uncountable and incommensurable features that makes the judgment subjective and contestable. But the systems we*



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use enable us to place horses in order during the show competition, from the worst to the best. And this is the most important. It doesn't matter so much if the system is point or comparative. They both work to choose the best horse. The rest depends on the judges themselves. If we start to use the wider scale, not only these "magic" 3-4 points (between 16 and 20) and if we would use all possibilities that the 10 or 20 points system gives, our verdicts would also be more clear. The problem is not in the systems but in its users.

**TA:** During the past few years a lot of smaller B and C ranked shows were cancelled due to the lack of entries. On the other hand it is extremely difficult especially for young or small breeders to compete against the world leaders on the big and prestigious events. How do you think the show scene should evolve nowadays?

**AS:** It seems that the division of the shows that we can already observe is inevitable. And it's not a division in the group of shows but in the group of show organizers. There is not too much similarities between the prestigious Middle Eastern shows with a great budget and huge prize money with cameral shows in Europe even B or A ones that also fight for their existence and every horse entry. They have much different problems. We know that the trainers who gather a lot of horse owners around have a big influence to the number of entries but they choose the shows most proper for themselves for many different reasons. On the other hand I don't really believe in the rapid development of amateur shows in Europe with breeders as the handlers. United States or Australia with the huge number of horses they have that their owners want to show somewhere gathers uncountable groups of amateur classes. In Europe, even to take Poland and its debacle trials to organize small regional events as example, it seems to be impossible.

I think the same as in the nature, we will observe the evolution processes of „dying” some part of shows that organizers tried to fight for but they will give up and at the same place the new ones will be created if their organizers would find a way to attract the participants. I also think that the differences in organization, rules and systems of conduct the shows will grow up between Europe and Arab countries, we already have some first signals of it.

**TA:** Which point of your career was for you the most important and which one the most satisfying?

**AS:** Almost every show brings some satisfying moments. It's nice when the other judges share our choices and the champion is unanimous. Hard moments are when I have to judge Polish state stud bred horses that I mostly know. Then I have to find a balance between the objectivity and my own affinities. The great satisfaction gave me the sentence of one of Polish state stud directors few years ago who after one of the



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shows where the horses of his stud competed and I was judging said: "I am impressed by the quality of your judging". The most important in this story was that those Polish horses were not the winners of that show and my scores didn't help them at all in general results.

**TA:** And your favorite show is...

**AS:** There are many shows I like. And the reasons for the sympathy are sometimes irrational. Beautiful place, warm atmosphere of hospitality, of course the better horses compete, the nicer to judge. There is nothing better than giving "twenties" with a belief that you would give 21! After many years of being a judge I still feel the goose bumps before every class entering the ring and sometimes I cannot help the smile coming to my face when I see the impressive horses taking my breath away.

**TA:** If you could point 3 most important features describing a good judge nowadays it would be....

**AS:** Independence, for which we have to sometimes fight against the overwhelming pressure to win, consequence, that helps us to choose the best from many others, distance to yourself and your task, accepting your right to make a mistakes and errors.

**TA:** There were a lot of newcomers graduated at several national level judge classes throughout Europe last year, most of them will probably apply to start their career as international judges in the near future. What would be your advice to the newcomers at the judges' panel in Europe?

**AS:** I always say: „no good advices" because it's the best to learn on your own faults and experience. I can say what



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*helped me – watching as many horses as possible, going to the shows, taking part in the seasonal horse previews in our state studs. If you see few thousands of horses' legs you can finally find out how the correct one should look like. After the twentieth pretty horse head you will be able to choose the prettiest one and explain your choice. In time you start to look on a horse as one adherent part and even if the separate features are not ideal – the overall look impresses. I don't want it to look like advice but... I'm sorry, but in my opinion what sometimes interrupts the judges is their own belief that they already know everything, they don't need to learn anymore and their verdicts are like the only right truth. There is nothing faultier. □*