



HARAS CRUZEIRO

A lifetime family journey

HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI,
A BREEDING PROGRAM CORNERSTONE



by Kamila Kozłowska ■ photos by Haras Cruzeiro archive

Since the 1980's, the long tradition of Arabian horse breeding in Brazil has been proudly continued by such famous farms as Haras Capim Fino, Fazenda Fortaleza and Haras Meia Lua. In the past few years, the Brazilian horse industry has flourished and increased its influence on breeding programmes in the USA and other parts of the world. Exporting such high-quality Arabians as FT Shaella, Honey's Delight RB, FTHavanna El Keav, RFI Unique, Flora LA, Dandara LA and El Jabez WH, just to name a few, shows how the world has turned its eyes to Brazil. The Brazilian Nationals have become the most celebrated Arabian horse show in South America and one of the most important events in the calendar of all Arabian horse aficionados.

Located in the large inland state of Minas Gerais, the world-famous stud of Haras Cruzeiro adds greatly to the worldwide success of Brazilian breeding programme. Owned by an equine enthusiast Leandro de Aguiar and skilfully managed by his nephew Andre Cruz, with the invaluable support of Zico Guardia, the stud has earned its reputation as one of the most prominent breeders in South America as well as the home of some remarkable representatives of the Arabian breed. The impressive collection of broodmares has created an inimitable genetic pool, which is further enhanced by some carefully selected stallions.



LEANDRO AND HIS WIFE NETA



LEANDRO, SIMONE LEO AND ZICO GUARDIA



ZICO GUARDIA, LEANDRO AND HIS NEPHEW ANDRE





HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI (MASSAI IBN MARENGA X MAYANA). 2-TIME BRAZILIAN NATIONAL CHAMPION





BELA LA (HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI X YASMIN HWM)

Andre, who bears the responsibility of managing this complex operation, agreed to share some of his secrets of the success of Haras Cruzeiro both in the breeding barn and in the show ring.

Kamila: How has the story of Haras Cruzeiro begun?

Andre: My esteemed uncle, Leandro de Aguiar, started breeding horses as early as in the 1980's. Two special breeds became the part of Haras Cruzeiro breeding programme: the majestic Brazilian-bred Mangalarga horse and the exceptionally exotic Arabian horse. In the 1990's, our focus shifted towards the Arabian horse breeding with another major turning point in 2010, when the international travels showed us what kind of changes we need to implement to achieve the highest breeding standards.

Kamila: Why did you decide to breed Arabians among other breeds? What is so special about them?

Andre: Arabian horses are very special. They have such undeniable charisma and amazing attitude that no other breed I know has got. Also, they are impressively intelligent and have big hearts. Their physical strength and resistance make them perfect for all-day work in the

farm, where they look after the cattle. Their willingness to work is simply astounding! On top of that, they are such beautiful creatures. Believe me, I can spend my whole day just looking at them and admiring them.

Kamila: I can definitely do the same! However, apart from being beautiful they also need to be horses. I am curious whether you, having bred Mangalarga horses for years, tend to introduce any elements of traditional Brazilian horse breeding into your Arabian breeding programme?

Andre: It is extremely important for us that our horses, no matter how beautiful they might be, do not lose the qualities and abilities to work. In our opinion, horses are made to be ridden, so you can never lose this perspective in the breeding program, no matter what the market dictates, what kinds of new show ring trends emerge or which qualities the international judges are looking for. All these are just tendencies which, similarly to other fashion trends, come and go. I think that fashion should be the last thing that determines your breeding programme. We should not forget that, as breeders, we have a massive responsibility for the development of the breed and for what we deliver to future generations.

In my point of view, stewardship is a fundamental value when it comes to breeding. Delivering individuals of higher quality than the ones we started with for the next generation of breeders is fundamental for the development of the breed.

Kamila: Thanks to your forward-thinking approach to breeding, Haras Cruzeiro is among the most significant Brazilian breeders nowadays. What is it like to have such an immense responsibility to manage the whole enterprise? In other words, what is the key to your success as a general manager of the stud?

Andre: I believe that breeding Arabian horses is such a privilege that every day of my life I am grateful for being a part of this amazing adventure, which is only possible due to the fact that I was born in a family of great horsemen. The tradition of breeding horses was first introduced by my grandfather Ananias Ferreira de Aguiar and is now proudly continued by my uncle Leandro de Aguiar, the owner of Haras Cruzeiro and my personal mentor. It is really amazing how much I have learnt from him in the past few years. Leandro is also the brains behind Haras Cruzeiro's vision and

breeding programme and by far the most passionate horseperson I have ever met.

Kamila: Let us talk about your horses. How many of them call Haras Cruzeiro home at the moment?

Andre: Considering all the breeds, I would say there are approximately 250 horses.

Kamila: That is quite a lot! What about the foals? How many of them are born each year?

Andre: I would say that we have approximately 40 new arrivals every year.

Kamila: Your herd is a mixture of different bloodlines. Are there any particular bloodlines that you personally prefer?

Andre: It is hard to point out one or two bloodlines that I could say are my preferred ones. I think that one of the most interesting things about breeding is when you mix some bloodlines that you would not normally mix and you manage to get extraordinary results. It is quite risky, usually does not work, but it is still worthy a try.

BELÍSSIMA LA (HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI X *MS MAGNOLIA)





CARÍSSIMA LA (HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI X *MS MAGNOLIA)

FAENA LA (HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI X YASMIN HWM)





HORTENCIA LA - MS MAGNOLIA (MARWAN AL SHAQAB)

Kamila: Are there any horses that you consider a 'must have' in the pedigrees of Haras Cruzeiro Arabians?

Andre: I cannot think of any particular representatives of the breed, but we are very fond of international pedigrees that have high genetic prepotency to enhance both type and conformation of our Arabians.

Kamila: Is there any historical horse that you would love to introduce into your breeding programme, but it is no longer possible?

Andre: Nowadays, almost everything seems possible, hence we are introducing Bey Shah and Padron into our breeding program. Thanks to our dear friends, David Boggs and Zico Guardia, we had a great opportunity to purchase frozen semen of these two outstanding stallions. I believe we can expect some

significant improvement in such desirable qualities as structure, attitude and movement with the use of these two legendary representatives of the breed.

Kamila: This is a very interesting addition to the genetic pool of your herd. Can you please share with us your breeding vision in a little more detail?

Andre: From my point of view, the horses that we breed must be strong, resistant, fast and hard-working. They also need to be intelligent and have the ability to learn fast. All of these characteristics, combined with good-character and friendliness, make a horse that is very close to perfection. It is not easy to find all these qualities in every horse, but they are definitely much easier to find in an Arabian. However, this is still not enough. As Vinicius de Moraes, a famous Brazilian

poet, bohemian and singer, one of the Bossa Nova creators, used to say “I would like to apologize to all the ugly ladies, but beauty is fundamental”. Thus, beauty is a vital quality, but only when it is combined with all the characteristics mentioned above. If I were to summarize Haras Cruzeiro breeding vision in one sentence only, I would say that we enhance the quality of our horses in the way that they become more skilled for those who need a soldier to win a war and more beautiful for those who want someone to be in love with.

Kamila: Beautiful statement! I wonder how HDB Sihr Ibn Massai, who is your main stud at the moment, fits into this vision. Twice Brazilian National Champion Stallion and a mixture of Russian, Egyptian and Spanish bloodlines, he seems to be an exciting breeding prospect. What made you choose him for your breeding programme?

Andre: Massai is an extraordinary horse, not only as an individual, but also as a breeding stallion. His pedigree, as you have mentioned, is a very interesting

FLORA LA
(HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI X FT HAVANNA EL KEAV)





ITALLIA LA - DAKOTA LA (WH JUSTICE)

mix. Genetically, he is very different to the majority of bloodlines we have here, which means that there are plenty of opportunities for him to be crossed with a lot of our mares. He has already contributed greatly to our breeding program.

Kamila: Do you remember when you first saw HDB Sihr Ibn Massai and what was your first impression of him?

Andre: Of course! It was in one of the paddocks in Aachen. He was just about to enter the show ring with Paolo Cappeti. In that moment, Massai really impressed Leandro and myself. Unfortunately, as soon as he entered the show ring, he slipped and fell down to the ground. After that unlucky incident, his performance in the show ring was really poor. I remember that it was a difficult day for Paolo too. However, his poor performance in the arena did not really matter to us, as we were already under his spell. His failure to win on that day turned out to be beneficial to us in the long term. If he scored better in the All Nations Cup, it would be much more difficult to bring him to Brazil...

Kamila: As the old saying goes: one man's loss is another man's gain! Which horse do you personally consider the best offspring of HDB Sihr Ibn Massai so far?

Andre: Massai has already proven himself as a sire by producing a few Brazilian National Champions such as Carissima LA and Dandara LA. The latter one is currently in the US, where she won first place in her category in Scottsdale 2020 with David Boggs. However, in my opinion, Flora LA is the best foal that he has produced so far as well as my personal favourite.

Kamila: Flora LA, Unanimous Gold Champion Young Filly in the 2018 Brazilian Nationals, is undoubtedly one of Massai's best offspring. She now belongs to Almazrouei Stud in UAE. Why did you decide to part with this beautiful filly, who is an amazing show prospect as well as a promising future broodmare?

Andre: It was a really difficult decision to let her go. It is extremely hard to produce a horse like that. For some, it is a lifetime endeavour to reach such high quality. When



IVANNA LA - HAVANNA ARABCO (EL TINO)

you finally manage to breed such an incredible animal as Flora, you wish to keep her forever in the barn next to your office and you wish to use her in your breeding programme. However, as I have already mentioned, all breeders have an enormous responsibility for the future of the breed. At that point in time, letting her go was the right thing to do, considering all the new possibilities for her with the new owners.

Kamila: Do you remember the day that she was born? Was it obvious from the very beginning that she is a special filly?

Andre: Yes, I remember that day quite well, and no, it was not so obvious from the beginning that she would be so special. I think we started noticing it when she was about 4 months old.

Kamila: Out of all the precious mares that belong to your herd, which ones have proven to be the most valuable broodmares?

Andre: We have many special mares with precious pedigrees, so it is very difficult to point out one or two.

However, FT Havanna El Keav and some exceptional Marwan Al Shaqab daughters have proven to be outstanding producers for Haras Cruzeiro.

Kamila: Which broodmare is your personal favourite and why?

Andre: Impossible to choose just one, so I have prepared a short list: FT Havanna El Keav, Turchiya MPE, MS Magnolia and Dandara LA. Havanna is the most winning horse in the history of Brazilian Nationals. Not only did she become 5 times Brazilian National Champion, but she has also proven to be an incomparable producer. It is enough to mention that she is the dam of one and only Flora LA. Turchiya MPE, a refined snow-white daughter of WH Justice, was Italian National Champion as well as Best Head Trophy winner at the World Championships in Paris. A beautiful bey Marwan Al Shaqab daughter MS Magnolia is a trotting machine and another remarkable producer. Among many outstanding offspring, she is the mother of Carissima LA, the 2014 Brazilian National Gold Champion Filly. Last but not least, Dandara LA



IRINA LA - EMARWA MEIA LUA (MARWAN AL SHAQAB)

by HDB Sihr Ibn Massai and out of DA Vincis Jewel, a classy chestnut mare who became Brazilian National Champion in 2018.

Kamila: And the best foal born in Haras Cruzeiro in 2020?

Andre: To me, the best one is Iara LA by Vitorio TO and out of Turchiya MPE by WH Justice. She is already very refined and feminine and she moves like she was flying.

Kamila: Of all the Arabian horses that you have met in your life, if you were to choose one that you love the most, which one would that be and why?

Andre: It is impossible for me to select just one, as there are at least two horses that have been especially close to my heart. When I was younger, I used to own a half-Arabian sport horse gelding called Dargon. He was an extremely brave and intelligent horse and my greatest companion. At the moment, it is FT Havanna El Keavan, an incredible mare with a big heart and an amazing soul, who holds a special place in my heart.

Kamila: Your collection of broodmares is really impressive, but you have recently purchased a young stallion EKS Farouk from Elkasun Arabians in RSA. What are your plans with regard to this promising future stud?

Andre: We have great expectations towards EKS Farouk. I believe he can be a perfect match for our Massai daughters and hopefully he can perform well in the show ring too.

Kamila: Let us talk about shows. Have you ever counted how many championships you have won so far?

Andre: In the last 10 years, our horses won 20 Brazilian National Championships, including 12 Gold, 6 Silver and 2 Bronze titles. We are extremely proud that 6 of them were awarded to Haras Cruzeiro own bred horses.

Kamila: What an amazing achievement! Do you remember your first major victory in the championships?

Andre: I actually remember three shows that were very



ISCA LA - DA VINCIS JEWEL (DA VINCI FM)

HARAS CRUZEIRO AT BRAZILIAN NATIONAL 2018





DANDARA LA
(HDB SIHR IBN MASSAI X DA VINCIS JEWEL)

Shaqab daughter that we imported from Italy, became Unanimous Gold Champion Mare and her presentation was unforgettable. Her exciting performance was very rewarding for myself and Zico Guardia, our commercial manager, as we put a lot of effort into helping her recover from a serious injury that she experienced in the same year. We never gave up, which made this win extra special. Another mesmerizing moment I have already mentioned and it was when our homebred Flora LA became Unanimous Gold Champion Young Filly. She is our pride and joy.

Kamila: I am sure you look forward to presenting your amazing horses again. With so many shows being cancelled due to the Covid-19 crisis, have you already created a plan for the 2021 showing season?

Andre: Not really. We hope that it all goes back to normal and all the shows recommence.

Kamila: In one sentence, what is the greatest dream that you have in relation to Arabian horse breeding and showing?

Andre: Being recognized as one of the most important breeders in the world, so that the Haras Cruzeiro-bred horses can compete and win at the shows in the USA, Europe and the Middle East.

After my conversation with Andre, I have no doubts that his admiration and passion for Arabian horses inevitably lead Haras Cruzeiro to becoming the stud of his dreams. The breeding programme is an extraordinary combination of traditional approach, where beauty and performance are equally significant, with innovative breeding methods and continuous investment in enhancing the quality and genetic variability of the breeding stock. Rather than being driven by current fashion trends, the Haras Cruzeiro breeding vision is based on a strong belief that all breeders have a tremendous responsibility for continuous development of the breed. The responsibility that only great horsemen, to whom breeding Arabian horses is a great honour and privilege, fully understand. □

special to me. I will certainly never forget the moment when Carissima LA became first Brazilian National Champion bred by us. Then, Dandara LA surprised us all by becoming Gold Champion Young Mare during 2018 Brazilian National Show. She somehow managed to fly under everybody's radar during the year and when she arrived in the Nationals, she was just perfect. During the same show, Flora LA became Unanimous Gold Champion Young Filly. We were extremely proud, but we knew already that it was her last year with us.

Kamila: Out of all the titles that your horses won, which one is the most important to you and why?

Andre: We have won Brazilian National Champion titles many times, but two victories were very special to me. In 2013, Shariba, a beautiful grey Gazal Al





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