

OSIERLEA SPRING CONFERENCE 2016
“From Ground Work to Grand Prix”
presented by J. Ashton Moore and Laurel von Bruun
on March 12th and 13th.



The conference was the second on this topic and was precipitated by requests from attendees at the first conference on the ground work held in 2012. We welcomed many return participants, as well as new guests – from rank beginners to professionals.

After a brief welcome, coffee, and introductions, the conference began with the statement “This is not a seminar about ground work! It is about using ground work to create a thinking rider and a receptive horse.”

Ground work was defined as “any interaction between a handler and a horse that is not mounted.” The varied applications addressed included preparing the horse for breaking, *teaching* the horse about the aids (not just applying them), getting an early start on lateral responses, morphing smoothly from the most basic ground work to Leading, Longeing, and Long Reining (including high-level movements like piaffe). The issue of safety was addressed repeatedly – especially when installing or re-enforcing the ever-important horse-human social relationship.

The conference was structured to provide theoretical information, as well as live demonstrations, and the opportunity for participants to have hands-on experience – taking a turn working the schooled horses from the basic ground work in hand, through the extensions, lateral work, and piaffe and passage.

It was, of course, an unusual and unique opportunity for everyone – to have a group of highly schooled horses available, and to have the opportunity to work with them under instruction. One person said: *“I never thought I would be able to work a horse at Piaffe! I actually did it!”*

The conference attendees learned about, and had a chance to put their own hands to correct Longeing and Long Reining, including Lateral and Longitudinal Flexions, Elevation of the Forehand, Backing, Turn on Forehand, Turn on Haunches, Shoulder-In, Haunches-In, Leg-Yield, Half-Pass, Extended Trot, Piaffe, and Passage.

Some ‘Pearls of Wisdom’ from the Conference:

What ground work teaches you and the horse, is directly applicable to riding. And Vice Versa!

Know the horses most likely natural response to an aid, and build on it.

Understand the importance of the handler’s auditory, visual and tactile communication with the horse

Establish “The Herd of Two” – a social relationship that installs the handler as ‘ALPHA’, using principles of horse psychology

Think of ‘*an aid system*’, rather than ‘*the aids*’. An aid system has four parts:

- 1) prepare oneself, physically and mentally, to make a request of the horse.
- 2) determine the aid you *wish would work*, and how strongly and long to apply the aid.
- 3) determine a time frame to allow the horse to register and respond to the aid. This could be number of steps, strides, or seconds, but must remain the same for each application of the aid
- 4) apply a correction – the appropriate correction depending on whether the horse gave a Non Response or a Wrong Response

One trainer in attendance said: *“I thought I knew this, but there is SO much more to it that makes it even more useful- I can’t wait to get home and apply it on my upper level horses and my students’ horses!”*.