

The Shagya Contribution

By Nancy R. Skakel

Many of today's equine athletes have a little known treasure in their ancestry. A study of the pedigrees of many different warmbloods will reveal the presence of the Shagya in their background. Once you become aware of this "pearl in the crown," you begin to recognize the contribution the Shagya has made to the development of the modern sport horse.

Today's sport horse breeds have their origins in the history of European cavalry warfare. The Austro-Hungarian Empire was renowned throughout the world for the superior quality of their cavalry horses. Their armies depended on a steady supply of strong, thrifty, brave horses that the average rider could handle over long distances and in the midst of battle. Those same mounts then had to carry their riders home to safety, often in harsh conditions. The standard cavalry mount was generally a product of French or English thoroughbreds crossed on native and Oriental mares. However, the Austro-Hungarians found that these horses too often had difficult temperaments, feed was sometimes short, and soundness was always a concern.

The Emperor Joseph II, wishing to promote a breeding program to supply stallions for the improvement of the basic cavalry stock, ordered the establishment of the Babolna Royal and Imperial Stud in Hungary in 1789. Expeditions were sent to Syria and other parts of the Arabian Peninsula to procure desert bred Arabians for Babolna. A breeding program was initiated with a goal of developing a breed to infuse Arabian nobility, thriftiness, hardiness, and tractability, without loss of size or bone, and with improved riding qualities. Through rigorous performance testing of both stallions and mares, very strict selection criteria, and careful culling, a separate Arabian breed was developed. Originally known simply as Hungarian Arabians, in 1976 the breed was officially named the Shagya in honor of one of the most influential of those early desert imports, a stallion named *Shagya*. His prepotency was such that he is found in the pedigree of nearly every Shagya horse. The Shagya studbook at Babolna goes back in unbroken lineage over 200 years. This consistent, focused, intense breeding program produced the Shagya specifically to be an outcross improver for other breeds, as well as a versatile riding and driving horse. The result is a concentrated genetic package with a high degree of predictability.

Shagya sires have been used in many of the preeminent studs of Europe, including Trakehnen, Hannover, and Janow-Podlaski, as well as studs in Holstein, Holland, Sweden, Switzerland, Belgium, Bavaria, Rhineland, Westphalia, Denmark, and of course, in Hungary at Kisber, Mezohegyes, and Radautz, and Topolcianky in Slovakia, and Kabijuk in Bulgaria. Shagyas have

also been used in the Lipizzan breed, and the German Riding Pony. Today Shagyas are accepted outcrosses in the Hungarian Felver warmblood registry, and many individual horses have been accepted into other registries. Many famous sires and Olympic competitors have Shagya in their family trees. Purebred Shagyas are successful in open competition with more widely recognized warmblood breeds in jumping, eventing, and dressage

One of the most influential stallions of the Twentieth century was the Anglo-Shagya, *Ramzes*. His purebred Shagya dam, *Jordi*, was a daughter of *Shagya X-3*. The 1989 Jumper of the Year, *Salut II*, and the top dressage sire of Holland, *Roemer*, are both of the *Ramzes* line. Competing at the 1988 Olympics in dressage were the *Ramzes* descendants *Romantico* and the gold medal winner, *Rembrandt*. Hilda Gurney's famous dressage horse, the Trakehner *Conducus*, was a son of *Ramzes*. You can still recognize the Shagya influence in Hilda's mare, *Levinia*, a granddaughter of *Conducus*. The *Ramzes* son, *Rigoletto*, Holsteiner, was a leading jumper sire in Holland. When you see an "R" line horse, such as *Rampal*, *Ramiro*, *Der Radetsky*, *Rantares*, *Romadour II*, *Ranley*—you will often find the Anglo-Shagya influence. Interest in the Anglo-Shagya is gaining resurgence in the United States and in Europe.

The Trakehner breed was a product of another area of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Their breeding standards and goals are very similar to the Hungarian warmblood, the Kisber Felver, and Shagyas have made significant contributions to both breeds. The Shagya "stallion of the century," *Gazal VII*, had three sons approved for Trakehners; *Heidedorn*, *Pelzjager*, and *Polarschnee*, as well as several daughters. The Anglo-Shagyas *Ramzes*, *Lapis* and *Burnus*, established their own sire lines in the Trakehner breed. *Bajar*, a German Shagya stallion, was used recently in Trakehner breeding. His sire line is known for athletic prowess and particularly for their jumping talent. *White Girl*, a Trakehner daughter of *Bajar*, was the German champion open show jumper. She competed at the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, as did the Trakehner/Shagya, *Askar AA*, and ¼ Shagya *Jaegermeister I*. *Askar* also has 3 sons approved for Trakehner breeding. Many other *Bajar* sons and grandsons have earned recognition in show jumping and three day eventing. One such is the Shagya *Ghazzir*, who has gained a special reputation for jumping and his ability to pass on his talent. He is also approved for Trakehner breeding. His Trakehner son, *Herakles TSF*, qualified for the Olympics, and is competing at CCI level. The approved Holstein *Bachus Z*, by *Bajar* out of a Holstein mare line bred to *Ramzes*, is a European Grand Champion open jumper. *Bachus Z* is said to be, "the *Ramzes* of the '90's," and is in great demand for breeding in Europe today.

List of Trakhener stallions with Shagya blood presented at the last Keuring in the USA:

<u>Trakhener</u>	<u>Generation in Pedigree</u>	<u>Shagya Ancestor</u>
Asher	4 th generation	Gazl VII via Heimische

Donaudeen	4 th generation	Gazl VII via Heimische
Fandango	4 th generation	Lapis
Glen Livit	4 th generation	Burnus via Lapis
Incantare	4 th generation	Lapis via Habicht
Martini PgE	4 th generation	Lapis
Platinum von Rappenhoff Pb	4 th gen.	Lapis
Prelude by Mozart	4 th gen.	Jordi
Prince of Prussia	4 th generation	Lapis
Stillette	4 th generation	Lapis via Burnus
Titulus	4 th generation	Lapis via Burnus
Tzigane	4 th generation	Lapis
Windwalzer Pg	4 th generation	Jordi via Ramzes

The breeding directors at Celle in Hannover have recognized the value of the Shagya contribution. One of the all time top producing Hannoverian stallions is the well-known *Weltmeyer*. He traces his lineage to *Shagya XVII* thru *Absatz's* dam, the Anglo-Shagya *Landmoor*. The Shagya *Gazal VII* stood at Celle for several years. He had several sons and grandsons accepted for breeding, including *Gastronom*, and the influential mare, *Granada*. The Shagya stallion *Czardas* also stood at Celle and left 5 sons and 72 daughters to carry his line in the Hannoverian breed. More recently, the champion Shagya stallion *Amor* was used, and the stallion *Agram* has Shagya in his heritage. Long time Hanoverian breeder Judy Elkins of Prineville, Oregon, bred two of her mares to the Shagya stallion *Obiwon*, of the *Bajar* line. She has been very pleased with the results, stating that these foals were, "the best she ever had."

During the 1996 Oldenburg Inspections chief evaluator Dr. Ramsauer pointed out the premium filly *Allegra*, by *Frohwind* and out of the Shagya mare *Aifa*, as an example of what the Oldenburg breeders should be striving to produce. *Allegra* has produced four premium foals. Her daughter *Wrendition* by *Wradar*, won the 2005 USDF All Breeds HOY at Training level. Vanessa Carlson, owner of *Frohwind*, reports that the young black mare *Amaja* from that same Shagya cross was awarded Premium status at the 2006 Oldenburg Inspections. "The quality continues," states Carlson.

**Oman*, a Shagya grandson of *Bajar* imported to the United States, completed the 1996 ISR 100 Day stallion test at Rancho Murieta, and was awarded a lifetime breeding license for ISR and Oldenburg. **Oman* also competed successfully in endurance, competitive trail, dressage, and eventing, with his amateur owner/rider, Carolyn Tucker. The **Oman* daughter, *Fayette de Cameo* won the Tevis Cup 100-Mile Endurance Race in 2002, after winning the Haggin Cup in 2001. *SMR Garcon*, a half-Arabian son of **Oman*, placed third in the 2006 Tevis Cup. Shagyas and Shagya partbreds have been winning at the international level in endurance competitions in Europe and in the Middle East. The 2006 FEI World Champion Endurance horse is the Shagya *Hungares*.

Halfbred Shagya-Arabs have also placed very well in Arabian Sport Horse shows here in the USA.

So what are the qualities the Shagya brings to the warmblood gene pool? According to the renowned Trakehner breeder, Dr. Fritz Schilke, "It is not what they bring to the exterior, but rather to the interior." When asked what the Shagya offers to other warmblood breeds, respected Shagya authority Capt. Laszlo Monostory said, "First, temperament. Second, overall harmony and balance. Third, hardiness and soundness." Shagya owners will tell you it is the temperament, the heart and mind of the Shagya, that is their most compelling asset.

This was certainly demonstrated by **Oman* at the 1996 ISR 100 Day test. At 15 years he was the oldest stallion competing. He was the smallest at just under 16 hands, the only one completely amateur owner/rider trained, the only one successful in endurance competition, and the only one out of 28 stallions that remained 100% sound throughout the entire 100 days! All of this on half the feed of any of the other horses. His cross-country run through slick, deep mud was sure footed, fast, and clean. During the free jump phase, he was the only horse that voluntarily came around again, eager to jump the 5' fences again just for the joy of it. That is a Shagya.

The old European breeding masters recognized the contribution of the Shagya for nobility, rideability, and heart. Their philosophy of "a drop of ink in the pool," translated into the use of the Shagya once every four to five generations. Since WWII the work of the vast state run studs has largely been taken over by small private breeders. If we examine the pedigrees of today's star equine athletes, we often find their Shagya ancestor in the fourth to sixth generation. Now is the time to consider the re-infusion of this precious genetic jewel. Put the blood on top!

As you become more familiar with the Shagya, you can recognize that prepotent drop of blood in other warmbloods, generation after generation. You see it in the chiseled head, large, kind eye, in the graceful neck, strong, supple, smooth top line, harmonious body, and most of all an elegant, noble, and charismatic bearing with a willing and intelligent mind. A versatile athlete, and a proud and willing partner, the Shagya is something unique and special, and he knows it!