

"What Performance?"  
Another view from W.A.

Carlisle and Emily Sheridan

When Allan Longman threw out the challenge, "What performance?" at the CPBSA AGM in Perth, we snapped to attention. My "day job" currently is examining Drama and Speech, including Performance Arts, for Trinity Guildhall, London at venues around the world, while Emily specializes in performance of a different sort - human movement and sport science. We decided to write some performance reports on our connemara ponies. (For our backgrounds, philosophy and pony profiles see our home page on <http://www.arach.net.au/~carlises/> titled, Powderbark Connemara Pony Stud).

## Report 1

*Name:* Fibber *Age:* 3.5 *Sex:* Stallion *Grade:* Initial - Performance Arts

### *Personal growth and development:*

You have filled out well, bone is good, and your height/weight proportion is appropriate for a pony of your age. Development under saddle is outstanding with full marks from your trainer, quote: "He is the best pony I have ever handled." However, you need to keep working on maintaining concentration during group drama opportunities because you are easily distracted by fillies and mares. Your own three foals to date are all healthy and friendly - congratulations.

### *Outstanding performance:*

The first ride outside our property a week after being started under saddle was along our dirt road to the local hall to attend a "Bring and Buy" sale when our car was out of action. Distractions included traffic on the road, refreshments such as hotdogs, and wild children, puppies and chickens. Lunchtime was achieved tied to a tree on the tennis court (yes, on the tennis court!) eating hay in a net, surrounded by admirers of all ages complete with balloons, bubbles, bicycles etc. All was achieved sensibly and calmly. What a performance!

### *Before going on to the next grade:*

Keep working on developing muscle to allow you to extend your trot for more than two steps and to canter in circles. Maintain your sensible attitude to all aspects of your life, but remember to save your energy for jumping over official obstacles rather than jumping gates between paddocks.

*Performance Grade:* Distinction!

## Report 2

*Name:* Cloonshee    *Age:* 4.5    *Sex:* Mare    *Grade:* Grade 1 - Performance Arts

### *Already achieved:*

Helping with the gardening, hiding in the henhouse (and getting wedged in the door), trying to ride a bicycle, wanting to be a passenger in your own cart, having your own international fan club. You are up-to-date with beauty parlour techniques and use the reflections in windows to check your appearance. You like to experiment with coat texture, colour and accessories through the application of whole body mud wraps, powderbark wandoo sap styling gel and hayseed fascinators. You have raised two foals successfully, you are happy to be ridden and to pull a cart in harness.

### *Outstanding performances:*

Your group and duo performances are highly developed for audiences who are ignorant about ponies. Your performance repertoire portfolio demonstrates that this year you introduced 52 children to riding through suburban pony parties and visitors to the stud. Also, you have reintroduced many people of all ages to riding and it is noted that you specialize in rides for both babies and grandparents, either together or separately. Your appointment diary is booked up until after the Christmas period. You have also been a quality photographic model, particularly for encouragement stickers (see sticker enclosed). What a performance!

### *Before going on to the next grade:*

Consider carefully the offer made by the Riding for the Disabled Association to work in their ensemble: this might impact on future foal productions and pony cart outings. Your personality would be welcomed by those students, but our audience would miss your dramatic performances here. Note, too, that you are too big to fit into the lambs' shelter and we are not the least bit sympathetic about the scratch you got on your face trying to get in with them.

*Performance Grade:* Distinction!

## Report 3

*Name:* Adare    *Age:* 5.5    *Sex:* Mare    *Grade:* Grade 1 -Musical Theatre

### *Already achieved:*

You have an excellent voice range which you use appropriately and your dance movements are rhythmical and athletic. Mane and tail growth is outstanding. You have successfully raised one foal with excellent mothering skills and we are all waiting for your next foal to be born at present. You have been a watchful Nanny for weanlings and yearlings, with a particular aptitude for chasing foxes, and you are very responsive to ride.

### *Outstanding Performances:*

1. A successful short term loan to a family of children visiting from interstate without their ponies. You demonstrated excellent adaptability and flexibility in that ensemble.
2. You provided - at short notice - a lively, responsive and safe ride for a sedentary but knowledgeable grandmother who wanted to explore some W.A. bush without walking herself. Your patience while flowers and birds were identified and admired was excellent and a calm response to a group of kangaroos was also noteworthy. Jumping logs and streams were outstanding.

What a performance!

*Before going on to the next grade:*

Keep working on foot placement, especially when being groomed. Also, note that being a successful Nanny involves actually *liking* other mares' offspring!

*Performance Grade:* Distinction!

## **Report 4**

*Name:* The Amigos Ages: yearlings & weanlings *Grade:* Initial, Group Drama Skills

(Darcy (anglo-arab gelding, chestnut), Eireann (connemara filly, black/grey), Rafferty (connemara gelding, palomino/grey), Rose (connemara filly, bay/grey) and Matilda Bay (connemara/anglo-arab filly, bay/grey).

Your group drama achievements have had outstanding universal audience appeal, particularly for non-horselovers, quote: "They are all so different that if you wanted to find the odd one out you wouldn't know where to start". All ensemble work is good with excellent eye and nose contact with your audience. Group dynamics are a little disrupted at feed time - Eireann needs to be a little less dominant for a smooth performance — however all eating activities are exceptional. While Rose's gallops are brilliant she needs to work on fitting into stationary ensembles more effectively. You have offered outstanding photographic poses but a number of people have complained about their close-up photos of nostrils. Remember to stand back and allow appropriate personal space.

All individual performance skills such as leading, tying up, floating, being rugged, groomed, wormed, clipped, inoculated, having feet trimmed and teeth checked are developing well. Rafferty is showing signs of wanting to learn more mature skills and will be started as a harness pony soon.

What a performance!

*Before going on to the next grade*

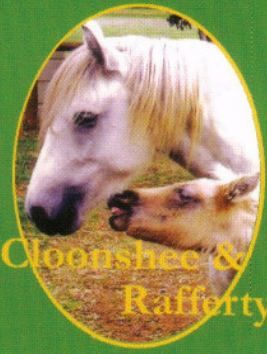
Please note that while your friendliness is outstanding, five heads sniffing pockets at once can be intimidating for some members of your visiting audience. Also note that buckets, bags, ropes and rugs should not be chewed, even when you are teething. Please use the hay, mineral blocks and occasional fallen branches instead.

*Grade achieved:* Distinction!

As readers of these reports above and our home page will deduce, we value temperament and performance on a day-to-day basis more highly than show or competition performances. Our ponies have nothing to prove through their pedigrees and show performances to date (Fibber was champion stallion at the Perth Royal Show as a yearling, for example, and will be performing in competitions in the future which are appropriate for his age and stage of development). We think that 5 minutes in the show ring and the day at a showground are useful socializing experiences for our ponies, but the activities they perform every day safely, confidently and willingly are better indicators of the versatility, kind temperaments and performance of the connemara breed.

**I RODE A  
CONNEMARA  
PONY**

*Powderbark Connemara  
Pony Stud, York*



**Cloonshee &  
Rafferty**